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Middleville Morticians: Some Social Implications of Change in the Funeralbusiness in a Southern City.

William Henry Porter Jr
Louisiana State University and Agricultural & Mechanical College

MIDDLEVILLE MORTICIANS: SOME SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF CHANGE IN THE FUNERAL BUSINESS IN A SOUTHERN CITY

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William Henry Porter, Jr.
B.A., Louisiana State University, 1948
B.D., Yale University, 1951
M.A., Louisiana State University, 1955
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ABSTRACT

Historically, the funeral business has been a culturally marginal institution that has sought social recognition and full institutionalization. This attempt, blocked in part by liberal theological elements, has nevertheless been aided by increasing secularization of the church and its consonance with middle class values in a materialistic culture.

In a functional-utilitarian sense the funeral director is seen as a needed actor on the social scene. The funeral business, established around a technological development, arterial embalming, with its allied arts, dermasurgery and cosmetology, is seen as utilizing this technology in terms of possession-control of the body as a latent, but nonetheless vital factor in the establishment of the institution in the culture. Middleville's morticians are followed through three phases in historical development, from a condition of complacent monopoly, exercised by a traditionally conservative family-operated establishment, through a period of revolutionary change initiated by a funeral director advocate employing relatively new and radical mechanisms in the implementation of dynamic concepts of service. A third phase has been indicated as an era of stabilization characterized by the emergence of a "new monopoly."

Against the backdrop of economic depression and

monopolistic mortuary practices the advocate's appeal to low-cost, personal service oriented funerals constituted the basis for changes that were fixed in the social structure by the catalytic effects of industrial insurance. Employed originally as a defense measure against outside burial association encroachment on the Middleville domain, this form of security assumed positive proportions in a competitive context. Spread geographically by the establishment of branch funeral homes and insurance offices using the free ambulance service provision as a promotional device, this new force provided the entering wedge and operational context for the innovator.

From the crucible of competitive struggle, which witnessed the near collapse of an old line traditional firm and the emergence of three others, has arisen a relatively stable condition adequately described as an "insurance monopoly." This condition is seen as serving as an effective deterrent to new competition. With comfortable monopolies in a rapidly expanding urban area, Middleville's morticians seem in a large measure future oriented. Significant proportions of their clientele are, through industrial insurance, committed to the utilization of their services, providing a measure of security that has resulted in reciprocal agreements and a resultant diminution of competition. Future competition, it is believed, is likely to have its locus in the area of industrial insurance, with deliberate emphasis upon the

cultivation of the professional and upper-middle classes. A career-type insurance agent is seen as a necessary prerequisite to such a program, with a possible realignment of the policy structure to adjust the level of benefits for the more privileged groups.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The funeral business, arising as it does out of an unfortunate admixture of crisis, chaos, and necessity, has been for the most part neglected by scholars in the field of sociology and for that matter by other fields as well. The lack of research in this general area has been noted by Faunce and Fulton.[1] In recent years two studies of a general nature have been made, one a sociological analysis of the American funeral director,[2] and the other concerned with the funeral director in terms of his occupation.[3] Habenstein is also co-author of a book published by the National Funeral Director's Association.[4] Both of the studies are general in nature and no study in terms of a smaller, more intimate, and hence more penetrating analysis has been attempted. This thesis represents such an attempt. The funeral business is investigated as a social institution

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[1]William A. Faunce and Robert L. Fulton, "The Sociology of Death: A Neglected Area of Research," Social Forces, XXXVI (March, 1958), 205-209.

[2]Leroy E. Bowman, "The American Funeral Director; A Sociological Analysis" (unpublished Doctoral dissertation, Columbia University, New York, 1954).

[3]Robert W. Habenstein, "The American Funeral Director: A Study in the Sociology of Work" (unpublished Doctoral dissertation, The University of Chicago, Chicago, 1955).

[4]Robert W. Habenstein and William M. Lamers, The History of American Funeral Directing (Milwaukee, Bulfin Printers, 1955).

and the report is confined to the development of this institution in one middle-sized Southern city, which in the study is called "Middleville." As a suitable background for the study a fundamental reappraisal of the funeral business has been attempted.

The thesis in no way represents an attempt at exposé and must not be so construed. The nature of the subject matter, shrouded for so long in semi-secrecy, might well be grounds for such misconstruction. Part of this secrecy has been intentional, the result of narrowly conceived and shortsighted ethical premises on the part of members of the funeral business. This has been partly responsible for much misunderstanding about the funeral business. One cannot forget, however, that the average person simply does not concern himself about the funeral business until he is forced to do so by circumstances. The would-be investigator has difficulty in obtaining accurate information concerning the funeral business, and popular knowledge is all too often based upon myth, hearsay, and imagination. Not only has too little study been done in this field, but the funeral business has not been adequately conceived in terms of its relation to the social structure.

The funeral business in Middleville is analyzed here in terms of a considered effect upon the patterns, customs, habits, and attitudes that surround the function of the burial

of the dead. The very nature of the funeral business is in this instance subjected to scrutiny as it is observed in operation in Middleville. The factors that have been involved in the initiation of changes in Middleville's funeral businesses are explored in terms of their origin, composition, duration, and effect upon the institution.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This study is limited to the development of the funeral business in one Southern city, and to such comparisons with the funeral business in general as have been considered necessary to render the study meaningful. Certain general factors seem essential, and they are used without apology or fear of encroaching upon the larger theme of the funeral business as a whole. One of the problems has been to keep the study in context without overly limiting the use of comparative material that might serve to clarify the issues. Despite the seemingly limited scope, it is felt that there is need for this type of study in a hitherto neglected area of research.

Certain other limitations have been considered necessary. With certain exceptions it has been deemed advisable to forego the inclusion of Negro funeral homes in the study of Middleville. It is felt that this would be a study in and of itself, and should not be incorporated in this piece of research. The exceptions are two Negro institutions that have had some

connection with the funeral homes being studied. Since this thesis is not primarily concerned with the general historical development of the funeral business per se, the liberty has been taken of interpreting historical data in such a way that it may be used to gain new perspectives that seem needed. These perspectives are in turn applied to the study in hopes of providing new insights into the funeral business.

METHODS USED IN THE STUDY

The study is the culmination of research that began on the interest level, stimulated by several years experience in the funeral business. The background material is the result of graduate research done at Yale University in 1949 at Sterling Memorial Library. Secondary research was continued in other libraries in 1956, 1957, and 1958. The general conditions surrounding the funeral business in Middleville were known to the writer as early as 1939, and additional knowledge of the nature and functioning of the funeral business there was obtained in the years 1940 and 1941. Three more years of more or less intimate contact with Middleville's morticians came in the years 1946 through 1948. Investigations of an informal nature were conducted in 1953, 1954, and 1955. Formal investigation for the production of the thesis began in 1956 and has continued at intervals through its writing.

Because of the nature of the problem, Middleville must

remain a "middle-sized city in the South," and the numerous people who are now, or have been at one time, engaged in the funeral business there must, for the sake of this study, bear names not their own. Some of these people now reside in other states, and still others could not be found. Some few have died. In this category must be placed one person who died less than a week before a scheduled interview with the writer to discuss some of the aspects of Middleville's mortuary problems. One other person, counted on to be an especially helpful respondent because of his astute observations and wide experience, defied location and has since been confirmed as dead. Local operators of funeral homes in Middleville were contacted several times in the course of data collection. This contact was maintained through the mails in the absence of the writer so that data were in the process of being collected for two years.

A vital part of the data collection process was the interview, fortified with prior knowledge of the funeral business in general, and Middleville in particular. It was not particularly difficult to establish rapport, but several visits were required in some cases before substantial progress could be made in the obtaining of worthwhile information. Techniques were varied to suit the prevailing conditions. Seldom were ordinary social conversations effective. A heavy dependence upon prior knowledge was an obvious advantage for

most interviews, and there seemed to be an almost perfect correllation between the willingness of the respondent to communicate and the ability of the writer to talk the language of the trade. With each successive interview the knowledge received became more valuable. First interview information, with one or two exceptions, was almost altogether superficial, with the respondents ordinarily seeming somewhat surprised at the range of knowledge of the investigator. Second and third interviews were quite often productive of knowledge that had been requested on other occasions but not granted. The writer's ability to supply names, dates, and places quite often helped to sustain the continuity of the conversation, especially when events of the long past were being resurrected.

The writer further undergirded his knowledge of the city's mortuary past by the standard procedure of examining written accounts where such were available. Middleville's newspapers, the Star and Journal and the Morning Courier were examined as well as older newspapers and periodicals on file in the library at Blank State University. Some of the respondents made their scrapbooks or newspaper clippings available, and Mr. D. W. Hollister included items from his personal files. It must not be assumed that the information received was complete, or even that it was adequate. Perhaps there is no area of investigation where accurate information is so difficult to obtain, and there are things that are virtually impossible to get out into the

open. One of the most important episodes in Middleville's mortuary history is talked about only by those involved in it indirectly, and then only with reluctance. The principals involved will hardly discuss it at all. The private world of the mortician will not be invaded under certain circumstances.

The depth interview, then, was used exhaustively in the research. The writer is in fundamental agreement with Gorden when he says that "the further the interviewer varies his techniques and tactics from the prevailing norms of social conversation, the deeper the information he obtains."[5] Hence, the conversations with Middleville respondents were unlike those ordinarily experienced by the interviewer. The depth interview has its limitations, and these are readily acknowledged, yet it seemed the natural research tool.

TERMINOLOGY

In a thesis of this type terminology can be either a stumbling block or a real aid to understanding, depending upon the extent and manner of its use and the strength of the concern for clarity. Explanation of terms has been conceived as a primary responsibility and in cases where there is any likelihood of confusion the explanatory footnote has been utilized in preference to extended explanations in the body

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[5]Raymond L. Gorden, "Dimensions of the Depth Interview," American Journal of Sociology, LXII (September, 1956), 159.

of the thesis. Every institution develops its own language, so to speak, and for obvious reasons the funeral business is even more prone to esotericism than most of the others. Technical terminology has been used as sparingly as possible, but never to the detriment of the thesis or when meaning might be distorted.

A SURVEY OF THE LITERATURE

Literature related to the funeral business is generally confined to four basic types: (1) historical, or those which deal with the accumulation of facts having to do with the field or any aspect of it, (2) polemic, or books and articles that either attack or defend the institution, (3) trade journals in the field, and (4) scholarly treatises. In the general preparation for the writing of this thesis literature from all of these four types has been surveyed. It is the purpose of this section to consider some of this literature by reviewing selected works from each type and analyzing certain scholarly contributions in some detail.

The following works of a historical nature were consulted: Bertram Puckle, Funeral Customs, Their Origin and Development (New York: Frederick A. Stokes, Publishers, 1926), Alfred C. Rush, Death and Burial in Christian Antiquity (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 1941), Effie Bendann, Death Customs (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1930),

Sir Wallis Budge, The Book of the Dead (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1914), Augustus G. Cobb, Earth Burial and Cremation (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, The Knickerbocker Press, 1892), Adolf Erman, Life in Ancient Egypt (London: Macmillan and Company, 1894), John C. Gebhart, Funeral Costs (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, The Knickerbocker Press, 1928), Lewis B. Paton, Spiritism and the Cult of the Dead in Antiquity (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1924), Francis A. Manaugh, Thirty Thousand Adventurers (Los Angeles: The Times-Mirror Press, 1934), Scudder Hull, What Becomes of Us? (Philadelphia: Dorrance & Company, 1943), Cyril J. Polson, R. D. Brittain, and T. K. Marshall, The Disposal of the Dead (New York: The Philosophical Library, 1953), Quincy L. Dowd, Funeral Management and Costs (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1921), Thomas J. Bonniwell, We Have to Die (New York: The Worthington Press, 1940), and the most recently published historical work, that of Robert W. Habenstein and William M. Lamers, The History of American Funeral Directing (Milwaukee: Bulfin Printers, 1955).

The last mentioned book merits extended treatment. One of the long range objectives of funeral director's organizations has been to educate the general public about the funeral business. This volume is a step in that direction. Designed for public consumption, it is basically a survey of funeral customs and practices beginning with the pagan roots of modern funeral practice and continuing chronologically to the present modern

system. The title of the book is somewhat misleading when it is considered that almost one-third of the volume is devoted to the mortuary behavior of the ancient Egyptians, Greeks, and Romans as well as the funeral concepts and practices of the early Christians, Hebrews, and ancient Germans and Scandinavians. The religious origin of Egyptian embalming is emphasised, and the Roman secular undertaker is noted in contrast to the priests who served as embalmers in Egypt. Early Christian mortuary rites are portrayed as simple and unpretentious affairs.

In the Middle Ages and Renaissance period Habenstein and Lamers indicate the abandonment on the part of the Christian Church of the simplicity that had characterized early practices. Funeral ostentation is shown as growing among the English middle classes and the wake, once practiced as an act of precaution against premature burial, is in this period continued as an act of piety. The authors indicate, with the rise of the medical embalmers and the advent of the barber-surgeon, a break with the past as far as embalming is concerned. Da Vinci, Harvey, Ruysch, and Hunter are immortalized in this connection.

Early New Englanders are credited with the possession of an austere reality where death was concerned, although this was tempered somewhat by funeral repasts. Toward the end of the early Colonial period, however, elaborate and costly funerals were being held. Early American undertaking is seen as arising out of the cabinet-maker's trade, and in typical American

fashion. The making of coffins came as a natural function of the person skilled in the art of cabinet-making. To this was eventually added the function of the "laying out of the dead," as well as the furnishing of certain paraphernalia and the renting of a hearse.

In the chapter on burial receptacles the authors consider the dynamic interplay of five themes that, it is claimed, serve as a key to the historical understanding of the development of coffins and caskets. These themes, utility, status indication, preservation of the body, protection, and aesthetic representation are evident in the presentation, which seems to be in the final analysis subordinated to the "also rans," a classification of odd types of coffins, caskets, and vaults designed with specific ideas in mind.

Habenstein and Lamers take the reader through the "ice age" in embalming in what is probably the best treatment given a topic in a single chapter. They dispute the claim made by many that Dr. Thomas Holmes of Brooklyn, New York was the first embalmer, although they cannot lay claim to any evidence which would designate another person in his place. Considerable influence is accorded the manufacturers of embalming fluids for the spread of the practice of embalming and for the establishing of schools of embalming.

An adequate chapter on funeral transportation is followed

by a description of late 19th century funerals that would seem more than adequate, and perhaps the most interesting of all for the lay reader. A home embalming case is described in some detail as well as the process of casket selection and the service that followed. A most important section of this chapter deals with the changing functions of the undertaker. Their summary follows the funeral director from a merchandiser of funeral goods to the position of a seller of services and in the final analysis sees him as the director of ceremonial proceedings.

The final two chapters are concerned with a detailed history of the development of funeral director's associations and a surprisingly brief coverage of modern funeral practice.

This book, although treated somewhat unkindly by Time's reviewers, who found the style of the authors as "...dry as Aristotle's ashes,"[6] is nevertheless a welcome contribution to knowledge in the field if for no other reason than the fact that it represents an amalgamation of many studies. Even the Time reviewer was forced to admit that this compilation of funeral history had a "great and gruesome fascination."[7] The conclusions reached by this critic seem representative of the

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[6]"Death, American Plan," Time, LXVI (October 24, 1955), 110-112.

[7]Ibid.

"radical" school of thought that has disturbed many modern morticians. In substance the reviewer felt that the funeral business, while removing death's sting, had also removed some of its significance.[8]

This book admittedly makes no attempt to present a comprehensive account of death and burial customs, rather it purports to plot the development of an occupation, and it is the considered opinion of the writer that this has been reasonably well done. The chapter on the modern funeral home seems not up to par, and perhaps too much space is given to the first part of the work dealing with death and burial in antiquity. Copyrighted by the National Funeral Director's Association, and presumably printed at some expense to them, this effort could hardly be expected to attain the objectivity in some phases that might be desired, especially by the scholar and the critic.

Polemic types typically come from popular sources and from the religious press, although certain of the books that have been mentioned in category one may qualify as polemics. Religious journals have published articles of a polemic nature for a considerable period of time. Hugh S. Tigner's "A Foray into Funeral Customs,"[9] is one of the more provocative articles

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[8] Ibid., p. 112.

[9] Hugh S. Tigner, "A Foray into Funeral Customs," The Christian Century, LIV (October 13, 1937), 1263-1265.

of this type. The writer of the article reports on the results obtained by the efforts of a group of clergymen to change some of the funeral practices in their city. This group of ministers, most of them under the age of thirty-five, became tired of what they called "responsibility without power." They were being dominated by the undertakers in the city when it came to funerals. In the past they had meekly acquiesced and fitted themselves into the system.

The "Middletown" Ministerial Alliance proceeded to set up a concept of Christian burial and translate it into specific meaning. In general they went on record as recommending: (1) disposal of the body as soon as possible after death, (2) the holding of large funerals in chapels and churches instead of private homes, (3) the closing of the casket before the service, (4) the elimination of music, with certain exceptions, especially singing, (5) the requesting of the family to make a choice between the clergy or a fraternal order to conduct the service, but not have both, (6) the restriction of Sunday funerals whenever possible, (7) the elimination of the procession to the cemetery, and (8) finally a reminder to people that a "fine funeral" and "respect for the dead" had no necessary connection whatsoever.

Copies of the concept, accompanied by specific recommendations, were sent to the city's undertakers. The new concept was also presented simultaneously to the congregations

of churches all over the city. The response was strong, unexpectedly bitter, and not confined to undertakers. The entire business community seemed resentful of the action that had been taken.

Tigner's conclusions are provocative. The people of Middletown, he avers, are living by a business ethic which rules the city. This ethic, which operates by its own logic, establishes two levels of business life, sacred and legitimate. Businesses about which no doubt exists as to their legitimacy are sacred, and any existing and clearly unforbidden business is legitimate. How does the minister fit into this world of business ethics which extends into and dominates the world of funeral customs? Tigner explains the dilemma in this manner:

> Ministers are hired, mainly by businessmen, to run churches. The employer has a right to dictate to his employee; furthermore churches are expected to function in whatever system secular interests provide and to show people living in that system that, despite the nature of the system, God's in his heaven and all's right with the world.[10]

Occasional articles about funerals and the funeral business appear in magazines such as Reader's Digest, Colliers Ladies' Home Journal, and McCall's. Coronet, another popular type magazine, provides a typical example of this type of literature. Thomas C. Desmond, Chairman of the New York State

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[10] Ibid., p. 1265.

Joint Legislative Committee on Problems of the Aging, wrote in 1951 concerning the problems he had come upon with regard to the funeral director and his relationship with the aging. This article, "The Vicious Scandal of Funeral Fees,"[11] stresses what Desmond calls the "gouging" practices of funeral directors. He notes that several elderly people were talked into buying "extras" on funeral services. He cites cases to show how poor, aged people have been mistreated in this respect. Testimony is cited from the case of W. W. Chambers, a prominent funeral director from Washington, D. C. who became a millionaire after he realized that the funeral business was a "racket." Also referred to is the United Mine Worker's Union report following the Centralia, Illinois mine disaster in 1947. Here the funeral directors were referred to as "ghouls" who moved in on the grief-stricken families with slick sales talk.

This article also considered the problem of cemeteries. Real estate operations involving considerable profit were cited as examples of current wrongs, and the graded price system for the opening of graves came in for censure. Desmond's advice for escaping from the problem includes the admonition to plan carefully and far in advance, obtain advice from a clergyman before selecting a mortician, use only licensed undertakers, and choose an inexpensive casket.

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[11] Thomas C. Desmond, "The Vicious Scandal of Funeral Fees," Coronet, XXX (August, 1951), 102-106.

Some periodicals, slanted as they are to appeal to a different level of the populace, tend to deal with funerals and the funeral business on a somewhat more sophisticated plane. The writer found this to be true of such magazines, both past and present, as Fortune, Survey, American Mercury, Time, Forum, Newsweek, Harper's Magazine, Literary Digest, The Independent, Scientific American, Scribner's Magazine, and Business Week.

The first trade journal in the funeral business was established in 1871 by one Henry E. Taylor who published a monthly paper which he called The Undertaker.[12] At the present time there are some nine trade publications, five of which are regional or area journals. The New England area is served by the Northeast Funeral Director, published in Boston, Massachusetts. Southern Funeral Director, with headquarters in Atlanta, Georgia serves the South. Midwestern undertakers can call the Mid-Continent Mortician their trade journal. It is the only trade publication serving the area around Minneapolis and the Northwest. Dallas, Texas is the home of Morticians of the Southwest, and Canadian funeral directors can subscribe to the Canadian Funeral Director, published in Toronto, Ontario.[13] The four remaining journals, with the possible exception of Mortuary Management, are found in all sections of the country.

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[12] Habenstein and Lamers, op. cit., p. 478.

[13] Ibid., p. 614.

The American Funeral Director, Casket and Sunnyside, and Embalmer's Monthly are found in Middleville's funeral homes in addition to Southern Funeral Director. There are other publications of lesser significance, some of which are the official organs of manufacturers of funeral supplies. Humane Embalming, a trade magazine copyrighted by Embalmer's Supply Company of Westport, Connecticut may be cited as an example.

A typical trade journal may be divided into some seven major divisions: (1) advertising, (2) "professional" type articles, (3) merchandising and allied concerns, (4) articles on technical matters, chiefly concerned with embalming, (5) business problems, (6) public relations problems, and (7) a legal and ethical division. In addition to these seven major areas the trade journal will often include current events that pertain to the business in any way, and an occasional bit of fiction will find its way into one of the periodicals. The current event is likely as not to concern the work of members of the profession[14] in some sort of disaster. In 1931 Casket and Sunnyside ran a series of short mystery thrillers with Horatio Humberton, an undertaker-sleuth combination, as the principal character.[15]

Major advertising over a six-month period in Casket and

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[14]The term "profession" is currently being used in trade journals. This does not imply acceptance by the writer.

[15]"The Dark Altar," Casket and Sunnyside, LXI (January, 1931), 9.

Sunnyside[16] included eighteen brands of embalming fluid, two steel companies, seven schools of mortuary science, ten different makes of funeral cars, twelve casket manufacturing houses, and seven companies manufacturing vaults.

Articles that seemed to relate to "professional" aspects of the business included such titles as: "With the Associations and Boards," "News of the Embalming Schools," "The Lady Assistant," "Does the Professional Attitude, When Followed Through, Pay Dividends?" Also included in this section might be an article like this: "The Funeral Director's Wardrobe."

The merchandising aspect of the funeral business is presented in articles such as: "Manufacturers and Their Men," and "How Much does a Funeral Cost?" This section can also be called upon to classify articles which urge "Better Selling Methods," and "Pricing for Profit."

The technical section deals mainly with embalming and its many problems. The embalmer who has been having trouble might be interested in such articles as: "Persistent Purging," "Drainage--It's Importance," "The Embalming Quiz Compend," or "Don't Blame the Fluid for all Your Failures."

Business problems related to the management of a funeral home are roughly those related to the operation of any type of

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[16]These titles were selected at random from Casket and Sunnyside from issues beginning January 1938 through June of the same year.

commercial enterprise. Operators of mortuaries are constantly concerned with "Air Conditioning," "Good Architectural Design in Modern Funeral Home," and "Insurance Problems of the Profession."

A very important part of the funeral director's work is bound up in the effort to achieve better public relations. Consequently almost every issue of a trade journal features some aspect of this problem. The funeral director may be on the one hand given advice on how to get along with the public in general, or advised of little schemes that will promote good will. He may be given news of public relations programs that are being developed by funeral directors in other parts of the country, and occasionally read an article which by its nature emphasises the relationship that he has with certain groups of people. Such an article as this one tends to point out the need for good public relations with a specific person in the social order: "My Friend the Funeral Director." This article was written by a minister, a not uncommon occurrence in funeral trade journals.

Because of the nature of the business the funeral director is constantly faced with ethical and legal problems. Articles that touch on these two phases are to be found in almost every issue. Such problems arise as: "Who has the Right to Take Charge of a Body?" The funeral director will face this problem several times in the course of a career. Some of the

journals, Casket and Sunnyside being one of them, have regular features dealing with legal matters.

The trade journal, perhaps more than any other single index, reveals the essential self-centeredness of the funeral business and reflects at the same time the deep dissatisfaction that the funeral director has with his status. In the journals one finds constant evidence of insecurity. The trade journal is for all practical purposes confidential, and subscribers are asked not to leave them where they may be ready by the general public. It is difficult for the critical observer to miss the crucial issues that are repeatedly highlighted in this trade medium, and the weaknesses of the institution are shown in bold relief in any critical analysis of them.

Scholarly treatises, the fourth type of literature reviewed, are few in number. Two articles in sociological journals are worthy of note, as are two doctoral dissertations. One journal article, "Status After Death,"[17] is a study of the relationship of social class to the various practices associated with death and funerals. The investigator, W. M. Kephart, interviewed managers of funeral parlors, cemeteries, monument makers, and operators of flower shops and mourning shops in the Philadelphia area. Funeral directors, he discovered, were able to differentiate their customers very well according to class

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[17]W. M. Kephart, "Status After Death," American Sociological Review, XV (October, 1950), 635-643.

when the index was based on economic criteria, although they experienced some difficulty with the variations in the middle economic bracket. In terms of the expenses involved in funerals, Kephart found that although the upper class spent the most money in absolute terms, the middle and lower classes spent more in proportion to their incomes. The intellectuals, he found, often asked for the cheapest funeral possible. Cremation, while increasing in incidence, continued to be an upper class phenomenon.

He found the lower class increasingly becoming the only class wanting to "view the corpse," and the highest social class in the city often never viewed the body at all. In flower arrangements he found that the type of flower did not seem to matter as much as the arrangement of the floral pieces. The wealthy chose basket and spray arrangements, preferring these to the ribboned wreaths and pillows of the lower class. Mourning clothes, arm bands, and door badges were found to be disappearing. Kephart also discovered that cemeteries are divided according to class.

This study, obviously exploratory in nature as far as the field is concerned, nevertheless points the way toward an important new area of research. Another more recent article has indicated the paucity of research in the general field and at the same time pointed out some of the kinds of research that needs be done. This article, "The Sociology of Death: A

Neglected Area of Research,"[18] by William A. Faunce and Robert L. Fulton, points out that until comparatively recently sociologists have shown little interest in the sociological and social-psychological significance of death. In their paper they purport to call attention to this neglected area of research and point out some of the aspects that need studying.

It is pointed out that none of the studies that have been done consider death from the point of view of a culture complex, rather, each one deals with a particular aspect or segment of the whole. The writers point out that the paucity of research cannot be blamed on the fact that the subject is not of some significance, and in this connection indicate that the money spent on funerals and related customs, not to mention "life" insurance, reaches substantial proportions. The role of the funeral director has been studied, and he and his establishment reflect the pervasive development of secondary group relationships and symbolize the conflict, frustration, and anxiety which accompany bereavement in our society. They interpret the tension that surrounds this role in terms of the changing nature of the funeral business and the nature of interpersonal contact.

Faunce and Fulton also see potential areas of research in the relative incidence of exposure to death in varying

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[18]William A. Faunce and Robert L. Fulton, "The Sociology of Death: A Neglected Area of Research," Social Forces, XXXVI (March, 1958), 205-209.

cultures, especially the contrasts between non-literate and urban-industrial societies. They feel that this may tend to produce varying cultural definitions of death. Also in the realm of the potential is a possible study about the use of humor and euphemisms regarding death, as well as the study of the meaning of death. The authors think that with the growing concern with problems of the aging population, a study of the meaning of death for older people might conceivably provide some insights for the general study of geriatrics.

The meaning and function of death rites and practices also need to be explored, as well as the carry-over of our status system into death and burial rites, which would mean an extension and expansion of the Kephart study mentioned previously. Changes in these patterns or customs should be noted, and their orientations established. Also to be explored is the effect of the changing patterns of social relationships in urban-industrial societies upon the meaning and function of death rites and practices.

The authors note a study in progress in which they have attempted to investigate the social correllates of varying attitudes toward death. This study classified respondents into primarily temporal or primarily spiritual frames of reference on the basis of reactions to questions about death and its effects. Because of the very small sample, the results of this preliminary investigation must be considered inconclusive, but

it would seem a step in the right direction.

Leroy E. Bowman's study, "The American Funeral Director: A Sociological Analysis,"[19] an unpublished doctoral dissertation, is a very general sociological analysis of funerals, funeral directors, and the funeral business. Very simple descriptive patterns are used in describing five funerals, each of a different sociological orientation. One takes place in a small village, another in a metropolitan city area, a third is set in an ethnic locale, a fourth describes the first funeral in a community church in Virginia, and the fifth portrayed is that of a worker's father in the settlement area on the edge of an industrial district. Bowman makes his analysis from what is known as the functional point of view and finds that the funeral serves several purposes: (1) reexperiencing of group association, (2) reaffirmation of intergroup affiliations, and (3) reassessment of norms. Each function he finds to be sustained by specific mechanisms. Three variables were found to affect the functions of funerals: (1) the prominence of the deceased person, (2) the social structure for funeral operations, and (3) the consonance of church and secular values.

The study indicates that there is no escaping the funeral patterns outside the risk of offending the community, and that

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[19]Bowman, op. cit.

even the secularists recognize the church as the institution fitted to carry out the final ritual that satisfies the expectations of the community. The funeral is seen against what amounts to a "backdrop" of bereavement, and Bowman points out that the "memory image," so often stressed by undertakers, has no basis psychologically or sociologically, since the lasting image is shown to be derived from experiences prior to the time of death and not from a last look at the body.

The author is convinced that the undertaker conceals more than the usual hidden resentment, and that a lack of complete acceptance on the part of society is partly to blame. The funeral director is shown as being more than ordinarily on the defensive toward people outside of the vocation, and Bowman concludes that in some of their responses to the social order they seem to be trying to get away from the realities of everyday living. The funeral director, however, seems to be more and more accepted, especially by younger people. Their status aspirations from the viewpoint of professionalism would have to come from the area of counseling, and Bowman found that people did not expect that the funeral director would be the one to whom they should look for solace and comfort.

The author sees three main threats to the present system of private funeral business: (1) public funeral homes brought about by increased clamor for legislation to that effect, (2) the threat by cooperative groups, and (3) the threat from labor

unions and like groups. With regard to the undertaker's relationships with others outside the vocation, he is seen as respecting the doctor, getting along smoothly with government officials, but having some difficulty with the social worker, which is understandable considering the fact that this person, working with the poor and economically marginal classes, sees expensive funerals in a different light than many others.

Several conclusions may be drawn from this study. First, it is a generally adequate survey of the funeral business, but is more localized than the title would indicate, hence it may be misleading. As the writer evaluates this work, Bowman has done a much better job of evaluating and analyzing the funeral than he has the funeral director, and while he has some very penetrating insights into the business, his observations and consequent functional analysis of the funeral itself is the outstanding feature.

One final look at scholarly works in the field is necessary. Robert W. Habenstein, who collaborated with William M. Lamers in the authorship of The History of American Funeral Directing,[20] is also the writer of a doctoral dissertation along similar lines. Much of the historical background that is to be found in the book also appears in the dissertation in

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[20]Habenstein and Lamers, op. cit.

somewhat the same form, and will not be repeated in this final survey, rather emphasis will be placed on analysis of the dissertation itself. In "The American Funeral Director: A Study in the Sociology of Work,"[21] Habenstein, in a historically-oriented frame of reference, portrays the funeral director as having antecedents in the ancient past but emerging in modern American culture as a needed actor on the social scene. In his present state of development, the funeral director is seen to have risen above the technologies of embalming and related preservative and beautifying techniques to the position of a director of the drama of ceremonial ritual. This drama, seen as the effort of this functionary to compensate for the void left in the social system by the lack of an integrated response to the phenomena of death, is now the prime responsibility of the funeral director. Modern American urban society has not provided an adequate cultural response to death; there are no traditions in the culture to support the bereaved family as once they were supported by the community. In pre-urban society the entire community responded to death in such a way that it had meaning. Considerable time was consumed in the processes having to do with the disposal of the body, and the community reflected its concern by participation. Community expectations had a great deal to do with the type of casket selected, and the person who was known to be able to afford a more expensive

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[21]Habenstein, op. cit.

funeral was expected to have a better funeral than those economically less fortunate. The void that has been created by the changing patterns of American life has become the province of the funeral director. In the absence of a tradition of death, it becomes the funeral director's function to define the situation in such a way that people can respond to it. This weakness in the social structure has presented to the funeral director a somewhat fluid situation in which his own survival may well depend upon how strong a role he takes in the defining of what, in the particular case, constitutes "decent burial." Sociologically, the ritual supposedly acts as a status reaffirmation gesture, providing the integrated response that is lacking in a segmented, quasi-independent social structure.

The taking of a strong role in the defining of what constitutes decent burial is complicated, however, by what is termed "client ambivalence." Because of the nature of the relationship an ambivalence arises between the survivors of the deceased and the funeral director which tends to hinder him from integrating his task into an organized system of work. This ambivalence is in part traced back to popular sources, such as magazine articles which complain about "The High Cost of Funerals." Habenstein indicates that this reflects the American demand for snappy, clever, and informative titles. The ambivalence is also traced to Hollywood, where the funeral

director continues to be depicted in an unfavorable light. Criticism is leveled at "Vice Squad," a Hollywood product in which the plot revolved around the indiscretions of a funeral director, and in which the "merchandising up" theme was played. A Broadway play, "The Biggest Thief in Town," which had its setting in a mortuary, has been described by Habenstein as being not the most suitable type of play for a Broadway show. A character on the "Life of Riley" radio serial, "Digger O'Dell, the friendly undertaker," deals in constant innuendo and double entente. The radio characterization is explained as being a vehicle for permitting repressed materials (death being repressed in our society) to be expressed by allusion and covertly shared. The solution to this problem is seen in minimizing client ambivalence and in decreasing personal and social distance in public and daily contexts.

The function of the funeral director, then, is seen as that which places him in a position of responsibility do do what society has not been able to do, define death in meaningful terms. In the expediting of this function the funeral director is responsible for the drama which has the essential function of making death a reality. In accomplishing this task the mortician is, through what has been called "impression management," a party to a highly serious form of make-believe during which the body, with the aid of the embalmer and the cosmetician, is suffused with the attributes of the living in order that it

may be interactive in the process. In the course of the drama, a three-act movement consisting of the establishment of mood, the sermon, and the committal, the psychological "working through" processes are set in motion which aid in the dissolution of anxiety and stress. This "social fiction" has in this instance provided a category of action appropriate for the working of these processes.

In discussing the work of the funeral director, a verbatim conversation has been recorded and interpreted by notes in the margin that indicate the specific aspects of the work being mentioned. The mortician is pointed out as being concerned over the public image of his trade, and somewhat insecure from a status point of view. Interested in the community around him and very much involved in it, the funeral director is seen as being sensitive to the ecological processes at work in the city. In a "typical call" situation the mortician notes the predominance of night calls, some of the factors involved in the crisis of death, and specifically notes the alienation of the dead body. Of considerable interest was the funeral director's concept of the psychological nature of the first contact with the family of the deceased. Throughout the process of funeral arrangements the mortician is pictured as one who constantly exercises judgment in various situations that have to do with funeral arrangements, selection of a casket, and the funeral service itself. This person felt that the funeral director should have

a "moral setup" in connection with the business, since at times problems arise in that connection. Support for the clergy was indicated, although in a somewhat negative connection, with the comment that "ministers owe a lot to undertakers." Some emphasis was placed on the non-contractual relationship with the client.

In discussions of the work of the funeral director in other connections, Habenstein concludes that there has been considerable erosion in the prestige of the embalmer, and that the funeral director has moved away from the technical aspects of the business and may not concern himself seriously with it in the future. Indications that the embalmers themselves have accepted this change in status is shown in the willingness of these technicians to join unions which put them on the same level (and in the same union) with chauffeurs and grave diggers.

In a chapter dealing with the economic and distributive aspects of funeral service in America, Habenstein explores the "mortuary complex," consisting of all of the industries related to the burial of the dead. Of significance in this connection are discussions of casket companies, cemeteries, mausolea, manufacturers of funeral clothes, chemical companies producing embalming fluids, and the like. An interesting comparison is made of regional differences in funeral service operations. In general he found that the South, Southwest, and Far West tended to have fewer funeral homes and more funerals for each

establishment than other regions. Over the nation he found that, as a rule, modest incomes accrued to funeral directors, with only nine per cent of the country's morticians exceeding one-hundred seventy-five funerals per year, and approximately forty-three per cent having less than fifty adult funerals in a year. Habenstein also found that the average community of twenty-five thousand population supported about five funeral homes.

Perhaps the most significant contribution made by the Habenstein dissertation is his analysis of funeral service operation. Funeral homes were classified into two polar types, the "mass mortuary" and the "local mortuary." These two types were contrasted in terms of five "operational variables" according to: (1) the nature of the service contact, (2) the community orientation, (3) the conceived unit of operation, (4) the establishment goal, and (5) personnel organization. In mass mortuaries he found that a corps of trained specialists made the service contact, whereas in the local mortuary the service contact was made by the funeral director. With regard to community orientation, the mass mortuary, like the supermarket, did not reflect the ways of the community. These large institutions gave to community funds because of business necessity. The local mortuary, on the other hand, reflected the ways of the community and gave to its support out of a sense of wanting to help because of

a felt need. The mass mortuary, he found, treated each body as a "case," whereas the local mortuary conceived of an obligation to the family. The establishment goal of the mass mortuary was found to be "business unlimited," oriented around the concept of added branches, higher volume, and better sales techniques, whereas the local funeral home was found to bear "socially encumbered" funerals, meaning that for the sake of the community some funerals would have to be conducted at a loss. With regard to personnel, the bureaucratic structure of the mass mortuary was noted, in contrast with the opposite situation in the local mortuary.

In an analysis of the funeral director in his work, Habenstein found that he was in a quasi-professional status, occupationally self-conscious, and somewhat ambivalent in defining the precise nature of his role. Ego-enhancement was found to come from participation in occupational associations, and on the local level through the development of a "service" rationale. The funeral director was found to use "funeral terms" to protect the self from constant contact with grief and emotion. Habenstein found that at the level of social processes there was a growing tendency for morticians to define and control mortuary behavior, and at the same time, a movement toward accommodation on the part of funeral directors, ministers, and public health officials.

In an attitude of projection, Habenstein conceived that

professional status for the funeral director must be sought, even in the face of antagonism and antipathy. It is understood that the demands of a professional-client relationship will not reconcile easily with the caveat-emptor, but the general impression that is received is that Habenstein forsees professional status in the offing.

This is a praiseworthy study in many respects. The historical development of the funeral director can be considered more than adequate, and the sociological analysis of funeral homes has added a measure of understanding to this area. Questions must be raised, however, concerning the nature and development of the modern role of the funeral director. It is to be doubted that the present role of the funeral director has come about as he has suggested. Too little attention has been given the role of the funeral director as an advocate of change, and the approach seems relatively one-sided in this respect.

Chapter II, concerned with a reappraisal of some of the facets discussed above, should help to clarify somewhat the views of the writer. It is to this historical reappraisal that attention must now be turned.

CHAPTER II

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE: A FUNDAMENTAL REAPPRAISAL

The need for reinterpretation of the historical factors in the development of the funeral business is a constant one. With each passing year events antecedent to the modern funeral director take on new importance when seen in the light of new knowledge and increased understanding. Periodical re-examination is necessary, using varying conceptual bases, if more penetrating insights are to be obtained. The constructed typology may be used in this connection, affording the user a framework within which a specific approach to the problem can be delineated. The typologies as herein employed are not considered as being all-encompassing, but rather as three dimensions of a single problem, that problem being the clarification of the relationship of the funeral director to the social order. As here conceived, the classificatory significance of these typological constructs is understandably limited. Their use in this connection seems justified only in the sense and to the extent that they expedite the understanding of the problem at hand by helping to clarify the central issues. A further notation regarding their use in the study should be projected. As here utilized, the typological use of frames of reference, it is hoped, will serve to clarify the approach that has been taken. With this in mind, the historical-tra-

ditional, ethical-religious, and functional-utilitarian approaches become dual in nature, being in one sense typological representations and at the same time indicative of approaches that may be taken toward the understanding of the problem of the mortician in his culture. The selection of types, while arbitrary, is conceived as being analytical-descriptive in nature.

THE HISTORICAL-TRADITIONAL FRAME OF REFERENCE

There seems to be a tendency for individuals and organizations to seek full acceptance in the social order. LaPiere, for example, indicates that the drift of all organizations is toward the institutional form.[1] In the historical-traditional frame of reference this is seen in application to the funeral business as an institution, a complex interweaving of folkways, mores, and laws around a central function.[2] Historically, the funeral business is seen moving toward what might be called "full institutionalization," meaning here the complete acceptance on the part of the social order of the function and of those whose roles have been designated for the carrying out of same. In the sense that "tradition" is used as a part of

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[1]Richard T. LaPiere, Sociology, (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1946), p. 356.

[2]Kingsley Davis, Human Society, (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1949), p. 71.

this first approach, the writer infers that the building up of a body of tradition is the inevitable concomitant of the move of any organization toward institutionalization.

Seen in a time dimension, the funeral business has sought to move from a position on the outer edge of cultural respectability to one of more or less complete acceptance by the social order. This movement, as interpreted here, is seen as consisting of three major phases. In the first phase the funeral function is seen as inherent in kinship groups and/or other mutual aid groupings. In the second phase there is the appearance of a functionary called the "undertaker," whose activities are restricted by negatively based cultural attitudes, a lack of technology, and economic residualism. The third phase places emphasis upon the results of urbanization and the increasing complexity of the social order. Specialization, made possible by technology and augmented by social innovations, is a characteristic of this phase, as is the bid for professional status.

In a time-line analysis the historical-traditional frame of reference is concerned with changing value orientations. Unfortunately, there is little uniformity in these changes, and all facets of the socio-cultural system do not change at the same rate of speed. Thus, any element of the culture which is identified with negative values is likely to change at a slower rate than others, and at the same time be

relegated to a marginal position. The institution that purports to deal in services for the care of the dead is in this sense dependent for status upon changing value orientations. This, of course, is in part the result of a highly integrated social structure in which the individual segments are interdependent. Conflict in value orientations can either aid or deter the rate of institutionalization. The relation of the Christian church to the burial of the dead is a case in point. Historically, the church has played a prominent role in the disposal of the dead, being considered the one institution specifically charged with duties attendant upon rites of burial. When Christian communities rose to prominence and the churches became powerful the burial of the dead became primarily a concern of the church.[3] A materialistically oriented culture, on the other hand, integrates more readily that phase of any culture element which coincides with its general value orientations. The funeral business, when interpreted from this frame of reference, is seen as caught in the conflict of culture elements and retarded in its bid for full institutionalization. This disturbed state of the funeral business can be traced in part from the attempt to serve these two masters, the church and the prevailing culture.

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[3]Sir Arnold Wilson and Professor Herman Levy, Burial Reform and Funeral Costs, (London: Oxford University Press, 1938), p. 53.

It is difficult to ascertain the present status of the business in terms of its relationship to the culture. Any reasonably valid estimate of the degree of institutionalization must be based, it would seem, upon observation of empirical data and subjective estimates of states of mind. In the first instance it is markedly obvious that the funeral director has become identified with the secular culture in such a way that his position on the outer fringe has been shifted to one much nearer the center. The modern funeral home, for example, is often hardly distinguishable from a pretentious residence in a suburban area, or from a reputable business concern if in a more commercialized section. As a person, the funeral director is no longer a man set apart. On the contrary, he is increasingly identified with civic enterprises, community agencies, and churches. He almost inevitably belongs to one or more fraternal orders. His services have become, and are becoming, increasingly more specialized to fit the needs of a more complex social structure. Secondly, trade organizations and funeral director's associations have instituted periodic attacks upon the opposing forces in the culture in order to expedite their own acceptance. These attacks have also constituted countering movements to forces that are seen by the funeral directors as being destructive of "the American way of life." Some evidence of this is to be observed in the efforts of trade organizations to discredit cooperatives and similar groups that have at times been formed for the purpose

of lowering funeral costs. The charge of "socialism" is frequently directed at these groups, and at other times implied by indirection when "the American way" is posited over against suggestions of the municipalization of funerals. The drive to destroy private enterprise is occasionally directed at "...preachers, teachers, editors, and others who are busy with other things and just follow along with anything that sounds 'good'."[4] It is frequently pointed out to members of the trade that public utility funerals would be costly to the taxpayers.[5] Cooperative groups are questioned as to the real motives behind these organizations, and it is intimated that their leaders are possibly promoters seeking profit for themselves.[6] Individual funeral directors have not always supported their associations or trade journals in such opinions. Middleville's morticians, for example, recognize the value of burial associations and industrial insurance, and there are those who believe that they prevented the collapse of the funeral homes during depression years.

One other facet should be noted. Funeral director's

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[4]Editorial, "About Attacks," Southern Funeral Director, LX (March, 1949), 10.

[5]Editorial, "Municipalizing Paris Funerals Costly to Taxpayers," Casket and Sunnyside, LVIII (October, 1928), 18.

[6]Editorial, "Misguided Zeal?" Southern Funeral Director, XXV (July, 1931), 28-29.

associations have on occasions utilized the services of the clergy in an effort to bridge the distance between the funeral business and the general culture. Prominent ministers have been guest speakers at national conventions of funeral directors, and have been referred to the trade as worthy members of the clergy, while others less sympathetic with the aims and ideals of the funeral director have been sharply criticized. Some of the more liberal ministers have been accused of wanting to destroy the American concept of funeral service. One group of ministers found that business interests in general objected when they proposed alterations in the funeral customs.[7]

The funeral business, then, like any other organization, tends to move in the direction of full institutionalization. As indicated here, efforts to encourage this movement by the removal of obstacles inimical to its implementation are not lacking. As will be seen, the revolution in the funeral business in Middleville has implications for this approach.

THE ETHICAL-RELIGIOUS FRAME OF REFERENCE

An analysis from the ethical-religious frame of reference is predicated upon the assumption that there is, when the nation as a whole is considered, considerable interest in and

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[7]Hugh S. Tigner, "A Foray into Funeral Customs," The Christian Century, LIV (October 13, 1937), 1263-1265.

preoccupation with, religion. Some 103,224,954 people, or about 62 per cent of the total population in 1956, claimed membership in churches.[8] This interest in religion has shown a long term trend toward growth, from a low of 16 per cent in 1850 with only two slight interruptions in upward progress to the present.[9] This analysis is based upon the premise that ethical precepts are inevitably a part of the religious life to the extent that "rightness" or "wrongness" is inherently involved. For religious people to become concerned in the ethical evaluation of their culture is a natural concomitant of the existential purpose of the order to which they belong. That order, or the ethical segment of it, must set itself in judgment by its very nature, and yet at the same time it must be consistent in some measure with the philosophically idealistic ethics of the culture in which it exists. In situations like this the primary problem of religious groups is that of putting into practice the articles of faith that have been developed over the years by church leaders, theologians, and apologists and handed down in the form of scriptures, sacred tradition, social creeds, and interpretations of all or any combination of these.

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[8]Benson Y. Landis (ed.), Yearbook of American Churches, (New York: Office of Publication and Distribution, National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A., 1957), p. 257.

[9]Ibid., p. 287.

The individual religious organization, as an instrument for implementation of the ethical content of the faith, has in many ways shown itself incapable of concretizing into direct social action the principles for which it avowedly stands. Yet within the religious-ethical frame of reference may be found some of the major obstacles to full institutionalization on the part of the funeral business, and, paradoxically, at the same time some of its greatest assets. To the extent that the Christian ethic has been socially implemented in a given area its influence has constituted a stumbling block of considerable proportions. The Old Order Amish still resist the machinations of the undertaker to the extent that he is not employed in commonly accepted ways. One undertaker in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania maintains a horse-drawn hearse to accomodate his Amish customers.[10] At a recent Amish funeral conventional funeral furniture was ignored in favor of a homemade wooden coffin,[11] although the report noted that the ancient austerity of the Amish had been softened by time. In this funeral, still more reminiscent of the religious orientation of the people, three lay ministers preached for two and one-half hours.[12]

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[10]John A. Hostetler, Amish Life (Scottdale, Pennsylvania, Herald Press, 1952), p. 21.

[11]"Burial at Honeybrook," Time, XLIX (January, 1957), 27.

[12]Ibid.

Especially important in this connection is the fact that Amish communities have been noted for the integration of religious ideals into every phase of family and community life. In situations such as this the funeral director has made very little headway. As a matter of fact, most other materialistic aspects of the culture have been rejected as well.

The "secularization" of the American church has been noted on many fronts. The "middle class" nature of many aspects of religious life in America has indicated a belief that these people (the middle class) are typically uneasy, status-seeking people who need assurance, confidence, optimism, peace of mind, and peace of soul to help them get along in the competitive world of which they are a part. That the church has attempted to provide this through its popular ministry there is no doubt. Each group seems to have its spokesman. Norman Vincent Peale has had widespread influence among urban middle class Protestants, to whom his messages appeal.[13] This "positive thinking" approach[14] fits well the middle class philosophy of striving because it tends to operate upon the premise that there is really nothing seriously wrong, nothing that positive thinking cannot cure. Peale has been harshly criticized by some of the more orthodox of the clergy.

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[13]J. Milton Yinger, Religion, Society and the Individual, (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1957), p. 99.

[14]Norman Vincent Peale, The Power of Positive Thinking, (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1952).

Bishop Fulton J. Sheen's books, lectures, radio and television programs have helped make him the spokesman for the Catholic group in the same social class, although his appeal is entirely different from that of the Protestant leader. The Peale approach is cast in broadly positive terms with little or no systematic theological undergirding. Sheen's "peace of soul"[15] philosophy is contingent upon the willingness of man to recognize his own sin and seek strength, not in himself, but in God. Rabbi Joshua Loth Liebman's Peace of Mind[16] has been read widely by Protestants as well as Jews.

To the extent that the church adapts itself to the culture to gain numerically in terms of adherents and at the same time a hearing on the larger scene, the strength of its ethical and social doctrine is diluted. Ernst Troeltsch's church-sect typology has implications on the ethical-religious level, and some obvious relationships in depth can be seen in Max Weber's The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism.[17] Troeltsch points out that the church (church-type in his typology) is built on compromise.[18] This compromise with the

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[15]Fulton J. Sheen, Peace of Soul (New York: Whittlesey House, 1949).

[16]Joshua Loth Liebman, Peace of Mind (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1946)

[17]Max Weber, The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism (London: G. Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 1930).

[18]Ernst Troeltsch, The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches (New York, The Macmillan Company, 1931), p. 331.

culture, with resultant "secularization" of the church, is perhaps best seen in the religious organizations supported by the American middle class. With its "social club" type of religion and permissive ethical system, this class has made the intrusion of the funeral director into the social order much easier than it would have otherwise been. One theory, an economic version of the middle class ethic, holds that when these people direct their activity toward non-human forms, they become successful exploiters of the natural sciences, but when they direct their energies toward human relationships they become exploiters of mankind.[19] Tigner's study in "Middletown" would seem to bear out the ethical implications of this thesis.[20] Not only are middle class ethics and religion diluted and modified to coincide with the secular world, but the nature of the class itself, rooted as it is in a context of striving, is amenable to exploitation in terms of prestige manipulation.

Overt resistance to full institutionalization on the part of the funeral director in terms of an ethical-religious frame of reference exists mainly on the professional level, with the brunt of the attack being borne by religious publications edited by liberal churchmen. Evidence of the recognition of the ethical side of the problem is to be found in the funeral business. Codes of ethics have been established by funeral

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[19]Henry Grayson, The Crisis of the Middle Class (New York: Rinehart, 1955), p. 133.

[20]Tigner, op. cit.

director's organizations and individual members are encouraged to abide by them. On the religious side, there is ample evidence of concern by funeral directors. They are urged to "cultivate" the minister, to try to show him their side of the matter, and to avoid antagonism.[21] Occasionally one finds a funeral director whose entrance into the business has its roots in a religious-like response to a vocational opportunity. One such person known to the writer feels that he was "called" to be a funeral director.

THE FUNCTIONAL-UTILITARIAN FRAME OF REFERENCE

The functional-utilitarian frame of reference is very closely related to the historical-traditional in the sense that it more fully explores the facets of the problem of institutionalization, with emphasis on the concepts of function and utility. It emphasizes the position that the disposal of the dead is a necessary part of the ongoing process of human existence. In this frame of reference the funeral director is seen as a very necessary actor in the state.[22] This point of view has found expression in many ways, not the least of which pictures the

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[21]Howard Raether, "Consider the Minister," Southern Funeral Director, LXVII (August, 1952), 20.

[22]Robert Coope, a frequent contributor to trade journals in the funeral business, is an exponent of this theory.

funeral director as a public servant extraordinary. This theme has found outlets in large scale disaster situations where the funeral director's equipment facilitates the care and removal of the wounded to hospitals, and where his skill as an embalmer may prevent the spread of disease. According to a report in one of the trade journals, the profession reached "new heights" in the New London, Texas explosion on March 18, 1937.[23] When several people died in an Arkansas tornado in 1949, the funeral directors in the area were praised for doing their job well.[24] This appeal to the funeral director as a necessary actor on the social scene is in part an outgrowth and refinement of the concept of the funeral director as a sanitarian.

The extension of the role of the funeral director into an advisory, counseling capacity has been a relatively recent development that has had the effect of establishing him on a broader functional base. In part this may be understood as the deliberate creation of a new role in connection with the desire for professional status. Also involved in its genesis has been the assumption of roles that have been in the past considered the sole prerogative of other groups. By virtue of

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[23] "Profession Reaches New Heights in Texas Disaster," Southern Funeral Director, XXXVI (April, 1937), 16-17.

[24] "Arkansas Funeral Directors Handle Warren Disaster Well," Southern Funeral Director, LX (February, 1949), 26.

what might be called a process of "functional assumptionalism," the funeral director has assumed roles that have been neglected or abandoned by other agencies.

Until the development and practice of arterial embalming became widespread in this country the word "undertaker" was quite appropriate as a descriptive term inasmuch as the services he offered were limited to side issues. In the period when community, kinfolk, and neighborhood mutual aid systems were operative and effective, the coffin was legitimately classed as "furniture" and makers of cabinets were employed to construct them when needed. Furniture stores stocked the products of the casket manufacturing industry as the older artisans disappeared. The renting of hearses increased the extent of specialization, and often brought carriage-makers into the business. The advent of embalming made possible, profitable, and often necessary the establishing of separate roles. From one who would "undertake" to perform a rather disagreeable task, to the present role of independently-situated, multiple-role-playing, professional-status-seeking individual is a considerable step.

Functionally, the funeral director fulfills his role under difficulties encountered by few other groups. Because of the nature of the business, negative attitudes are always a problem, and the funeral director is constantly aware of the necessity of treating the delicate matters attending death with great

care.[25] He is blocked in his efforts to achieve professional status by the fact that he was a business man, a dealer in funeral furniture, before he became a performer of services. Since professional status has been traditionally dependent upon the concept of service to the public need, the funeral director has sought to move in this direction while at the same time retaining his role as a merchandiser of goods. In terms of the problem being considered, the two roles are incompatible, and the result has been at best a sort of semi-professionalism. In an effort to achieve higher status for the funeral director the trade associations have long advocated higher educational requirements and stricter licensing regulations. One other difficult hurdle on the road to higher status via professionalism has been the problem of the entrepreneur. The crux of the difficulty lies in the state laws governing funeral businesses. These laws vary from state to state, but in general it has been possible for anyone with sufficient capital to go into the funeral business by the relatively simple expedient of getting a funeral director's license. This license is issued by a state board, contingent upon the passing of a relatively simple examination. Thus,

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[25]In the front of a little pamphlet from a leading funeral home are words indicative of the concern of the funeral director about delicate matters: "This little booklet is presented to acquaint you with _____ Service. Should it come into your hands at a time of serious illness in your home, we ask you to please ppstpone its reading until your entire family again enjoys normal health."

almost anyone could get into the funeral business and employ the necessary technicians for its operation. This tends to reduce the embalmer to the position of a technician in some cases, and at the same time enables the business-minded person to break into the field with a minimum of difficulty. This makes it difficult for the funeral director to claim the status of a professional since his position is mainly entrepreneural and marginally service. A recent trend, obviously designed to remedy this situation, would make the embalmer's license in all cases prerequisite to the funeral director's license.

A gradual change in the concept of professionalism has been an aid to the funeral director. Gellhorn notes that the specialist has come to be called a professional because of his extreme competence in a relatively narrow field, whereas at one time broad knowledge and general understanding was thought to be of the essence.[26] Just such a change as this has made it possible for the funeral director to claim, and in some quarters receive, professional status.

The problem of values arises in connection with the functional-utilitarian frame of reference in terms of the roles assigned to the funeral director on the basis of his functional necessity. Historically, negative values have been assigned.

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[26]Walter Gellhorn, Individual Freedom and Governmental Restraints (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1956), pp. 107-108.

Undoubtedly the prevalence of the "undertaker" stereotype has had a part in this ascription. This stereotype has pictured the undertaker as a sombre, moody, long-faced cadaverous looking individual, lean of limb, and impeccably dressed in his black suit. So pervasive has been this stereotype that even today ultra-conservative clothes are often referred to as "undertaker's clothes." Cartoons, moving pictures, radio and television characterizations, and humor have helped to sustain the idea. The existence of the stereotype and continued public expression of it arouses the ire of funeral directors who have aspirations for professional status. A newspaper reporter, capitalizing on a coincidence (if it was a coincidence) which placed an undertaker on the "sick committee" of a local Lion's Club, provoked an unfavorable response in a trade journal.[27] The application to the funeral business of certain basic humor forms is almost certain to draw a protest from the more sensitive of the funeral directors. The following anecdote has been applied to many groups, but is most likely to be resented by funeral directors who are concerned with the status of the business as a whole: Man: (reading epitaph on tombstone) "Here lies the body of John Doe, a funeral director, and an honest man." Comment: "You know, that's the first time I ever heard of three people being buried in one grave." This sensitivity

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[27]Editorial: "It Isn't Funny," Southern Funeral Director, LX (February, 1949), 16.

would seem to exist mainly among those who seek professional status. Those who are primarily concerned with local affairs do not seem to mind, or if they do, conceal their feelings very well. As a matter of fact, one of Middleville's own morticians has taken rather genially to the nickname "Digger."[28]

The indispensability of this functionary has not been seriously questioned as the social order has become more and more complex. The need for a specialized group in this realm has been obvious since primary groups and rural culture began yielding to secondary groups and urban culture. The attempt to create a positive value concept on the part of the social order for the funeral business has been bound up in the efforts to justify situations that point to the funeral business as being functional and utilitarian in general cultural terms as: (1) a sustainer of the great American economic system of free enterprise, and (2) as a preserver of sentiment that is held to be essential to the good life. As noted previously in this chapter, cooperative ventures are considered to be characteristically un-American, as are the municipal burial practices in other countries. Logically, and perhaps economically sound is the claim that money spent for funerals goes into circulation and provides work and wages for innumerable

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[28]A name that originated with a radio characterization of some few years ago, "Digger O'Dell, the Friendly Undertaker."

artisans.[29] This concept of the funeral business corresponds very well with the notion of the circular flow of economic activity.[30]

The concern for the maintenance of sentiment is another matter entirely. The validity of this concept rests in the final analysis upon a subjective evaluation of the culture. While no satisfactory answer to this is possible, it would seem apparent that members of the funeral business have tended to equate sentiment with reverence, and the synonymity is open to question. The necessity for the maintenance of sentiment is recognized in a slightly different light by more candid members of the business whose concern does not extend to altruistic levels, and whose frame of reference seems to be more objectively conceived. To these people sentiment is the raison d'etre of the funeral business. One funeral director frankly admitted that the funeral business was about 60 per cent sentiment.[31]

In sentiment the funeral director is faced with a type of problem that exists in two dimensions: (1) the problem of

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[29]Robert Coope, "The Evolution of the Mortician," Casket and Sunnyside, LVIII (October, 1928), 1.

[30]George Leland Bach, Economics (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1954), pp. 33-34.

[31]This funeral director, while still holding licenses, has been absent from active participation in the business for several years.

the maintenance of a general feeling that will create and sustain certain social patterns, and (2) the problem of the effective utilization of immediately available resources in specific situations. In the first instance the maintenance of sentiment as a general value throughout the culture cannot be ignored because the funeral business in its modern setting is a complex unit that is inextricably involved in its social milieu. Any lessening of the values accruing to sentiment in one part of an interdependent culture is bound to be felt eventually in some measure in the other parts. This problem of the increased interdependence of culture elements has been both a plague and a blessing to the funeral director. On the one hand it has meant that he has received "fringe benefits" from any change in the total culture that has been favorable to the maintenance of sentiment. At the same time the funeral director has had to expose himself in the general cultural scheme in order to uphold his end of the struggle. He has been forced to support interrelated businesses when they, too have become concerned. When he feels compelled to support the florist in the effort to keep flowers in the funeral service, he is extending himself in the network in the interest of the survival of both. This interconnectedness is evidenced in the mutual support that is offered. The executive secretary of the National Funeral Director's Association, in an address before the 1954 convention, evidenced fear that the growing custom of omitting flowers might eventually affect other aspects

of the culture, namely funerals. At the same time he expressed some fear that influential people in certain religious circles might win out in their advocacy of a memorial service to take the place of the funeral service.[32]

It is at this point that the funeral director sees a more practical side of the sentiment factor. The physical factors that are likely to affect sentiment through emotional responses are carefully scrutinized. Those that are likely to evoke favorable responses are sought, and those that are likely to create unfavorable impressions are scrupulously avoided. For example, the funeral director is careful to avoid lights that create shadows in the reposing room. Soft, well-diffused non-glaring light of low illumination is recommended.[33] Music is seen as an important factor, helping to control moods through providing "...the subconscious such influence as will incite it to offset and overcome the depressing effects of the conscious state which these people are in."[34] The pivotal factor around which sentiment is

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[32]Howard C. Raether, Executive Secretary, National Funeral Director's Association, "Address to the 1954 Convention in Seattle, Washington," Southern Funeral Director, LXVII (December, 1954), 31.

[33]R. J. Diefenthaler, "Proper and Effective Lighting for the Modern Funeral Home," Southern Funeral Director, LXV (September, 1951), 24.

[34]Victor I. Zuck, "The Musical Program Helps Control Moods When its Selection is Made With Great Skill," Casket and Sunnyside LXXX (July, 1950), 22-23.

essentially wound is the body of the deceased. Embalming, the preservative process, as well as dermasurgery and cosmetology, the restorative and beautifying arts, are sentiment-preserving factors in the sense that they make the body seem to be in a quiet state of repose.[35]

Embalming; a Specialized Aspect of the Functional-Utilitarian Frame of Reference

A specialized aspect of the functional-utilitarian frame of reference requiring special treatment is that phase of the funeral business known as embalming. It is not the purpose of this thesis to become involved in a lengthy treatment of this process, but rather to outline some of its technical provisions as a background in order that it may be effectively linked with other factors.

The process of embalming is, unfortunately, too closely related by popular ascription to its antecedents in ancient Egypt. There is ample evidence that the time interval which separates ancient and modern development more than adequately divides the two--ancient and modern embalming--except in the understanding of a substantial portion of the general public.

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[35]This constitutes a contribution to sentiment that the funeral business calls the "memory picture." A central factor in this is the appearance of the body. The funeral director consciously strives to create the appearance of a deep, peaceful sleep, and is well aware that his reputation as an embalmer is at stake, depending upon how successful he is in creating this illusion.

Modern embalming, in contradistinction to ancient means of body preservation, is a relatively simple process that consumes at best only a few hours, and under certain circumstances a matter of minutes. Egyptian embalming, despite popular belief and purported scholarly assumptions to the contrary, cannot be considered the precursor of embalming as we know it. A claim to "some kind of a continuity" in embalming is made by Habenstein and Lamers,[36] and this is granted, but it would seem preferable to draw a line at the point of the discovery of arterial injection. Fredrick R. Ruysch, a Dutch professor, is usually given credit for being the first person to use arterial injections for purposes of preservation, although Scotch anatomist Dr. William Hunter was the first to publicize the process and divulge the fluids used.[37] Both Ruysch and Hunter were dependent upon the discovery of the circulation of the blood by physician-physiologist William Harvey.[38] This would seem to link the modern process of embalming far more closely to the field of medicine than is commonly realized.

Dr. Thomas Holmes, a Brooklyn surgeon, has been given credit for being the first embalmer in this country,[39] although

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[36]Robert W. Habenstein and William M. Lamers, The History of American Funeral Directing (Milwaukee: Bulfin Printers, 1955) p. 140.

[37]Ibid., pp. 160-161.

[38]Ibid., p. 160.

[39]Thomas J. Bonniwell, We Have to Die (New York: The Worthington Press, 1940), p. 74.

the studies of Habenstein and Lamers do not support the claim.[40] They do not attempt to name the first embalmer in this country except to note that in all probability he was a surgeon as well as an embalmer.[41]

While embalming techniques were being practiced by some few people during and shortly after the Civil War, commercial fluids in any appreciable quantity were not being produced until 1880, and the first organized instruction in embalming did not come until 1881.[42] Prior to this time homemade chemicals had been used by inexperienced but ambitious embalmers. One such formula consisted of a mixture of soda, glycerin, and corrosive sublimate. It was strong enough to bleach a body to which death had come from the black plague.[43] The year 1900 seems to have been roughly the turning point for the development of embalming in this country. Commercial fluids were being manufactured by several firms, and embalming schools were in operation. Early advertisements about these new fluids were replete with claims and counter claims regarding the efficacy of the products.

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[40]Habenstein and Lamers, op. cit., p. 324.

[41]Ibid., p. 330.

[42]Ibid., p. 344.

[43]Robert Smith, "Early Experiences of an 'Old Un'," Embalmer's Monthly, XIX (June, 1906), 167.

Several claims were made concerning the effectiveness of the fluids in the embalming of difficult cases. One brand, Esco-Radium, claimed to have restored to a lifelike appearance a body that had been in water for 141 days.[44] Four years later the same fluid was used to "perfectly" embalm the largest woman in the world on the hottest day of the year.[45] The Champion Chemical Company entry in the field was employed in the embalming of the body of Chauncey R. Morlan, the largest man in the world at 748 pounds, and the body was kept for seven days.[46]

Improvement in embalming fluids is indicated throughout the trade journals, with technical refinements enabling the embalmer to select fluids according to the case. For example, special fluids have been developed for the treating of jaundiced bodies. Recent changes have made the embalmer's work more pleasant. In April, 1952 the Champion Company announced a new fumeless cavity fluid.[47]

Modern embalming is a relatively simple[48] process that

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[44]Advertisement: Embalmer's Supply Company, The Casket, XXX (February, 1905), 16.

[45]Advertisement: Embalmer's Supply Company, The Casket, XXXIV (February, 1909), 33.

[46]Advertisement: Champion Chemical Company, The Casket, XXXVII (November, 1912), 34.

[47]Advertisement: Champion Company, Southern Funeral Director, LXVI (April, 1952), 21.

[48]It can become highly involved technically, however.

consists in the utilization of the circulatory system of the human body to carry chemical preservatives under pressure to all parts of the body reached by that system. The pressure may be created in several ways. Modern pressure machines are commonplace, and have been in use for several years. There are indications that pressure embalming is not as modern as it is sometimes thought. Johnson reports that one Dr. Wyvodzoff, a St. Petersburg Russian, devised an air pressure device in 1875 which was at least seventy years ahead of his time.[49] Perhaps the "trade embalmers"[50] were the first to take advantage of the speed that accompanies high-pressure injection.[51] Visceral matter is not removed in modern embalming processes, although some of the early arterial embalmers apparently used this technique.[52] Body cavities are treated with a "cavity fluid" that is injected with a "trocar"[53] to facilitate distribution to remote areas.

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[49]Edward C. Johnson, "The History of Embalming," Casket and Sunnyside, LXXIV (May, 1944), 26.

[50]A "trade embalmer" is one who does embalming as a technical specialty. Generally speaking, he works for funeral homes that do not maintain resident embalmers.

[51]Carl F. Hauser, "High Pressure Injection," Southern Funeral Director, XXXVIII (March, 1938), 33.

[52]Habenstein and Lamers, op. cit., p. 160.

[53]A "trocar" is a hollow metal tube, pointed and perforated on one end and connected on the other end by a hose to a fluid container or dispensing apparatus.

Cosmetology serves the funeral business in exactly the same manner that it serves the beauty salon, but dermasurgery, that branch of embalming which specializes in the restoration of destroyed features, is an additional service. This practice, often referred to as "restorative art," is quite essential in some respects, especially where the "memory picture" is under consideration. The writer has seen various facial features reconstructed, and has known of an entire face being rebuilt. In the latter instance the embalmer was guided by a photograph. Trade journals, dealing with these matters in technical sections on embalming, will occasionally show a "before" and "after" series of pictures in which a mutilated face is restored.

It is well to note that most early embalming was done in the home. Pre-embalming days necessitated almost immediate burial or use of the "ice box" to delay decomposition. Until 1930 in some parts of the country the embalmer was still doing some home embalming. His equipment consisted of a "grip" that contained basic instruments, fluids, blood bottles for drainage, and some means of injection, usually a small hand pump or in some cases a gravity bottle. As will be indicated in a later section, some bodies were being removed to mortuaries to be prepared in the years immediately following World War I. This change from home embalming to preparation room operation was not without its difficulties. Myth, rumor, ignorance, a semi-secret system of ethics, and no doubt an occasional unethical

undertaker, made the change slow and difficult. In some cases the "lady assistant" was employed to allay fears. The public had to be "educated" in the use of embalming.

The real function of embalming, as seen in this attempt at fundamental reappraisal, has undergone changes that are seldom understood. The first function ascribed to the process was that of sanitation, if we take for granted some historic overlap in the realm of religion.[54] Historically the function has, as this thesis maintains, gradually changed to the point where sanitation, while admittedly yet of some importance, is not the major factor. The maintenance of sentiment through the creation of a "memory picture" is generally recognized as a more important function than sanitation, especially when the psychological aspects of grief and mourning are taken into consideration. Certain latent factors appear to have been overlooked, or at best not thoroughly understood. In the first place temporary preservation of the body adds a time dimension to the process of burial without the cumbersome inconvenience of the ice box. Home embalming did very little except to remove this inconvenience and effect sanitary measures. The second factor, the change from home embalming to preparation room embalming, is of more importance. This shift in the locus

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[54]Religious groups have maintained an interest in the preservation of the body as a preparation for the day of resurrection.

of operations has been one of the most important developments in the funeral business since its inception. The development of an elaborate establishment under such conditions becomes not only advisable, but imperative. The extension of services under competitive conditions makes greater sensitivity to change in the total culture almost inevitable. The funeral now becomes more vulnerable to forces outside the home and kinship group. It becomes amenable to manipulation in terms of the class structure and prestige-status considerations.

This shift in the locus of operations, made possible by embalming and education to embalming, has been augmented by urbanization with its conseqent crowded conditions, apartment-house living, and an increasing tendency toward smaller dwelling units. These things in combination have played a part in the rise of the funeral director to his present position.

This new function of embalming has made "possession-control" a most important, if latent, factor in the funeral business. It has meant that certain factors could be controlled, and to the potential if not the actual advantage of the controller. Not only can he now "merchandise" under controlled conditions, and the conditions be manipulated for the best interests of the merchandiser, but he also has the advantage of having a wide variety of funeral furniture, thanks to the casket companies. Every device that can be created, every service that can be rendered to make the time of crisis less wearing and burdensome

on the family of the deceased becomes in effect part and parcel of this latent factor.

SUMMARY

The funeral business as it is today can scarcely be understood apart from its historical development. This aspect has been very adequately, of somewhat stoically, portrayed in a work published by the National Funeral Director's Association and written by Robert W. Habenstein and William M. Lamers.[55] A fundamental reappraisal is necessary if the central issues in the thesis are to be understood, and this reappraisal is couched in terms designed to lend themselves to a reinterpretation of the funeral business along other than conventional lines.

Three frames of reference are used, the historical-traditional, the ethical-religious, and the functional-utilitarian. Inasmuch as they represent three dimensions of a single problem, that of the full institutionalization of the funeral director, the divisions are somewhat arbitrary and overlapping is found. The first frame of reference is concerned with the efforts of the funeral director to move through barriers to reach a point of cultural respectability. The second frame of reference points to some of the problems inherent in the ethical and religious spheres that tend to

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[55]Habenstein and Lamers, op. cit.

block or aid the funeral director to achieve this end. The third frame of reference examines the position of the funeral director as a needed actor on the social scene, and special reference is made to the functional-utilitarian aspects of the technical process of embalming as it has affected the development of the funeral business. The concept of "possession-control" is projected as a latent factor in the funeral business.

CHAPTER III

MIDDLEVILLE MORTICIANS:
PHASE I, THE MAKING OF A MONOPOLY

Prior to a description of the first of three phases in Middleville's mortuary history, it is necessary to look briefly at the city itself.

INTRODUCTION TO MIDDLEVILLE

Despite its size and relative importance in its own region, no formal history of Middleville has ever been written. Some four theses from Blank State University, plus two articles from historical quarterlies constitute the total offerings. Of the four theses, one deals with Middleville during a twenty year period from 1830 to 1850.[1] A second thesis is concerned with the period 1850 to 1860,[2] and a third treats the period during the Civil War and the early years of reconstruction.[3]

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[1]Meriel LeBrane Douglas, "Some Aspects of the History of Middleville from 1830 to 1850" (unpublished Master's thesis, Blank State University, Middleville, 1955).

[2]Fredrick S. Allen, "A Social and Economic History of Middleville, 1850-1860" (unpublished Master's thesis, Blank State University, Middleville, 1936).

[3]Robert J. Aertker, "A Social History of Middleville during the Civil War and Early Reconstruction" (unpublished Master's thesis, Blank State University, Middleville, 1947).

Only one of the theses deals with a later period and it is a photogeographic study.[4] The origin and early settlement of the city is written about in one of the historical quarterlies,[5] and another such journal tells of its political significance.[6] One demographic study, while not dealing exclusively with the city, nevertheless offers interesting statistical evidence of its present status.[7]

Briefly, Middleville is situated in the heart of a metropolitan area of no little significance. Located strategically in terms of the presence of abundant natural resources, adequate transportation and water supply, it has developed into an important industrial center. Its population growth was slow until the turn of the century. At the time of the 1840 census it was still classified as a "small town" and not until 1860 did it begin to emerge from the village category and show some sign of promise.[8] By 1890 Middleville's population had

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[4]Chester B. Beaty, "Middleville, Blank, A Photogeographic Study," (unpublished Master's thesis, Blank State University, Middleville, 1950).

[5]Andrew C. Albrecht, "The Origin and Early Settlement of Middleville, Blank" Blank Historical Quarterly, XXVIII (January, 1945),

[6]Joseph Favrot, "Middleville, the Historic Capitol of Blank," Blank Historical Quarterly XII (January-October, 1929).

[7]Ora V. R. Watson, "A Comparative Demographic Analysis of Two Blank Cities: Middleville and Camden" (unpublished Doctoral dissertation, Blank State University, Middleville, 1956).

[8]T. Lynn Smith and C. A. McMahon, The Sociology of Urban Life, (New York: The Dryden Press, 1951), pp. 160-163.

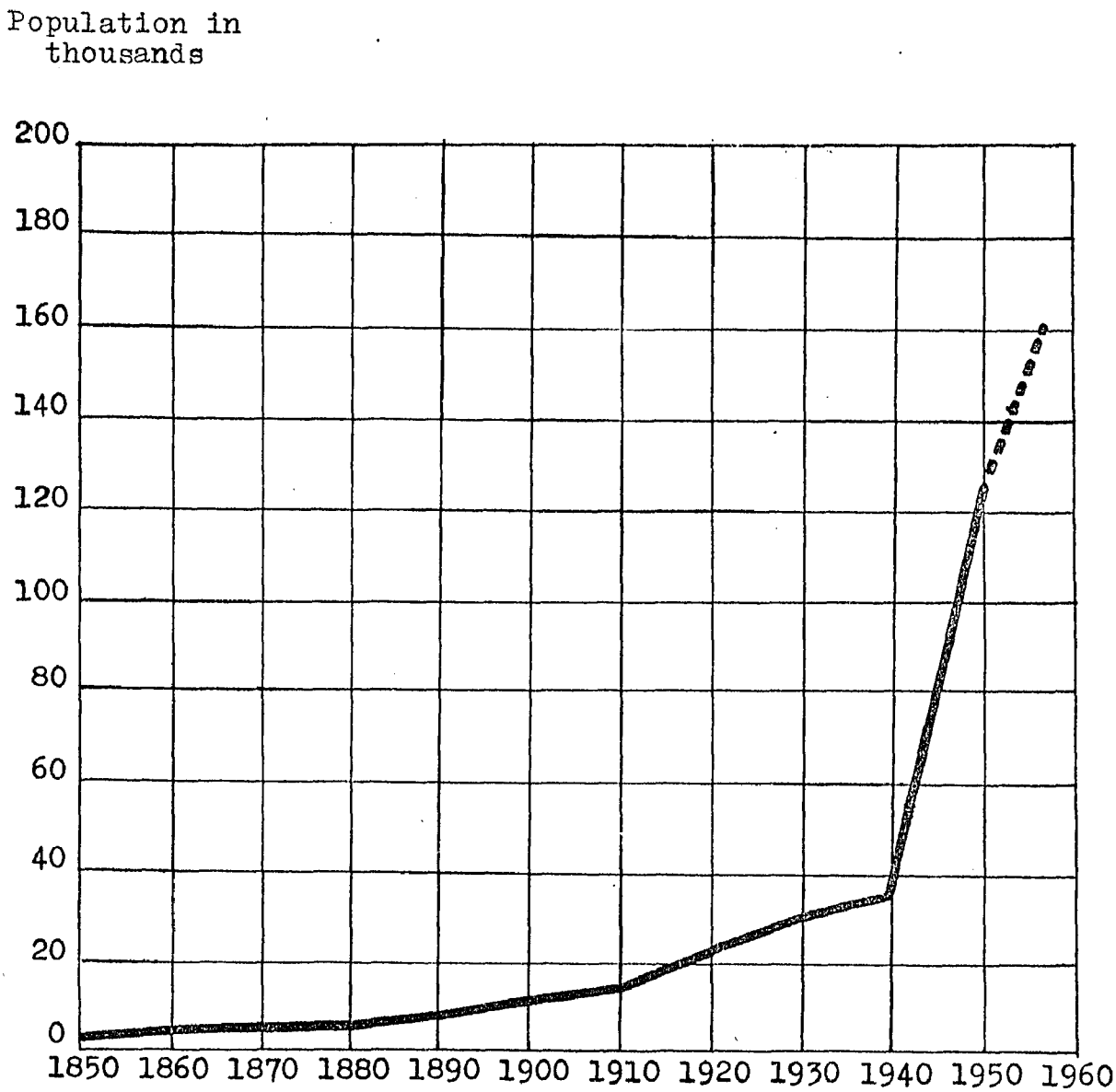

FIGURE 1

POPULATION GROWTH IN MIDDLEVILLE, 1850-1958

Source: United States Bureau of the Census, Seventeenth Census of the United States, 1950. Number of Inhabitants. Vol. I (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1952), p. 18-7.

passed the 10,000 mark.[9]

The atmosphere of Middleville in the closing years of the 19th century appears to have been that of a quiet, small town. We are told that people were hospitable, and things were pleasant, easy-going, and genial.[10] As the "flower city," it was known for its mild climate and verdant foliage,[11] and by way of industry it boasted several mills and factories, among them a large cotton seed oil mill, a number of sawmills, some moss factories, sugar refineries, and some eight or ten cotton gins.[12]

Shortly after the turn of the century the city began to develop industrially, and the population showed substantial increases over a period of three decades. A major oil company established a refinery in Middleville in 1909, and today petroleum and related industries form the largest single industrial block.[13] This "industrial revolution," beginning in

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[9]United States Bureau of the Census, Seventeenth Census of the United States: 1950, Number of Inhabitants, Vol. I (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1952), p. 18-7.

[10]Dallas Tribune, August 28, 1921.

[11]E. M. Muse (ed.) Elks Souvenir of Middleville (New Orleans: L. Graham & Sons, Printers, 1901), p. 6.

[12]Ibid., p. 45.

[13]"The Blank Story," reprinted from the Manufacturer's Record, Baltimore, Maryland, December, 1954, p. 22.

1909 has since been attended by developments in the chemical industry made possible by the abundant water supply and the presence of unusually large quantities of basic materials used in these industries. Equally important is the fact that Middleville's industrial workers are the second highest paid in the nation, and one of the characteristics that has marked the city's economic scene has been its ability to withstand depressions. This fact has been exploited by the Middleville Chamber of Commerce, which claims that

> ...an outstanding characteristic (of the Middleville economy) is the tendency of sales activity and buying power to maintain high levels and even show increases while the national tendency is downward.[14]

It should be noted here that Middleville was not without its economic problems during the depression. In 1932 the Central Labor Union in the city sponsored a "Hire-a-Man" campaign,[15] and the Star and Journal, one of the city's two newspapers, ran full-page advertisements trying to stimulate buying.

THE PIONEERING YEARS

Middleville's funeral businesses, as far as written records indicate, date back to the days of the Civil War.

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[14]The Powersite, a Middleville Chamber of Commerce publication.

[15]Middleville Star and Journal, June 20, 1932.

Prior to that time there were merchants who made cabinets and sold furniture, with the making of coffins being a part of the business.[16] Habenstein and Lamers indicate that the combination of cabinet-making with undertaking functions appeared with some frequency during the earlier half of the 19th century.[17] In 1845 one of the merchants of this time in Middleville was George Crump, whose notice appeared in the Advocate-Times:

REMOVAL

> The undersigned, respectfully informs the citizens of Middleville and its vicinity, that he has removed his Cabinet Ware shop from its former location to the first house below Mr. John Reid's, near the Market House, where he will, as heretofore, attend to all orders in the cabinet-making business, and continue to keep on hand the various articles in his line, such as Bedsteads, Chairs, Armours, Tables, Looking Glasses, cedar Chests, garnishing paper, &c., &c.,
>
> Coffins made at the shortest notice, and at the most reasonable prices. He will keep, as usual, a Hearse, which will always be ready to hire.
>
> GEORGE CRUMP[18]

The firm of Potter and Wagner, in addition to carrying a full line of furniture, also had a "...new and excellent Hearse,"[19] and, of course, made coffins on short notice.

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[16]Douglas, op. cit., p. 5.

[17]Robert W. Habenstein and William M. Lamers, The History of American Funeral Directing (Milwaukee: Bulfin Printers, 1955), p. 229.

[18]Middleville Advocate-Times, May 28, 1845.

[19]Middleville Advocate-Times, March 25, 1846.

An analysis of the papers at this period indicates that in all probability Potter, of the firm Potter and Wagner, was a carriage-maker as well. This was not an unusual combination of occupations at the time, since the carriage-makers were among the first to see the profit in the renting of funeral coaches.

By the year 1865 the word "undertaker" was being used in public advertisements, and metal coffins were replacing the "made on order" system of the cabinet-makers. One A. Baumgardner had a "full assortment of Metallic Coffins" in his establishment at the corner of Main and North Streets.[20] There were several undertakers in Middleville, among them, in addition to previously mentioned Baumgardner, such names as Potter and Wagner, Jacob Funk, Fred Piper, J. A. Broussard, Bradford Hall, and, although not found in notices, August Hagenbeck. Since undertaking businesses are quite commonly passed down from father to son, one might expect to have more than one representative of these found in later years. Such has not been the case. The only name that exists in Middleville today is one that was not found in the newspaper notices in the years 1865-1867 when the above mentioned undertakers were in operation.

Middleville's oldest mortuary, the Hagenbeck Funeral Home,

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[20]Middleville Advocate-Times, October 11, 1865.

claims its roots in Middleville from this period of time, 1865-1867. There is some disagreement as to the actual date that the business was started. The "official" date is 1866, but for some time 1865 appeared on their advertising copy, and at least one member of the Hagenbeck family says that there was a Hagenbeck organization as early as 1861.

These were the pioneering years for undertakers. The funeral home was, in Middleville at least, not to appear until around 1900. The motorized hearse was still more in the future. Cabinet-makers, furniture dealers, carriage-makers, and even hardware dealers were involved in the business at times. Most of those involved in the early years after the Civil War had faded out of the picture by the turn of the century.

THE HAGENBECK COMPANY: OLD LINE TRADITIONAL

August Hagenbeck, a Prussian-born ex-Confederate Army Captain, established the cabinet-maker's shop that eventually became a funeral home. A craftsman of merit, his wooden-pegged furniture is still treasured by the family. A picture published in the Middleville Star and Journal in February, 1957, showed about half of the building that was occupied by the son of the old founder. The picture, accompanying an article entitled "Old Buildings Go in March of Progress,"[21] was in this particular case used in the paper in conjunction

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[21]News item, Middleville Star and Journal, February 28, 1957.

with the story about the impending destruction of one of the oldest buildings in Middleville. Unfortunately, the picture was not dated and there is no way of knowing when it was made, but from the knowledge gained from other sources concerning the location of the Hagenbeck Funeral Home at various times in the history of the establishment, it would seem on the safe side to date the picture before 1900. The building itself appears to have been a comparatively small one-story structure. On the side of the building in large block letters the name of the concern was indicated: "A. J. Hagenbeck, Furniture Store, Cabinet-Maker, and Undertaker."[22] The location of the building at that time was in what today would be just one block from the geographical center of the Middleville business district.

The present Hagenbeck generation has every reason to believe that the founder of the business was concerned primarily with the making of cabinets and furniture. Undertaking apparently came later as a sideline. At two different times in the history of the organization partnership arrangements existed. As far as is known August Hagenbeck operated an individual proprietorship type of business, but his son Charles was in business in 1901 in a partnership agreement with Claude Thomas,[23] and four years

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[22] Ibid.

[23] Muse, op. cit., p. 86.

later had changed partners, this time taking William Fournet into the business.[24] The Hagenbeck-Fournet combine was dissolved before 1913,[25] although it was known to exist in the partnership form in 1909.[26] The last partner, Fournet, is said to have experienced a prolonged siege of illness that forced him to retire from active business life.

The Hagenbeck-Thomas firm did their business from a Main Street location, but by the time Fournet came along the Milwaukee Avenue location was in use. This change in locations involved a change in the method of operation. In view of the fact that the livery stable was close by in the case of the downtown location, horses that were used with the hearses and ambulances were rented. The move to Milwaukee Avenue made the getting of horses both slow and inconvenient, hence a stable was built in connection with the new funeral home and two horses, solid grays, were purchased. In connection with the funeral home was a carpenter shop that was used by Charles Hagenbeck, a cabinet-maker like his father, and a builder and decorator as well.[27] This new location also contained the

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[24]T. J. Maloney (comp.) Middleville City Directory (Middleville: The Maloney Company, Publishers, 1906), II, p. 344.

[25]Ernest H. Miller (comp.) Middleville City Directory (Asheville: Piedmont Directory Corporation, Publishers, 1914), VI, p. 333.

[26]T. J. Maloney and C. C. McMurchy Middleville City Directory (Middleville: Interstate Publishing Company, 1909), IV, p. 247.

[27]One Hagenbeck specialty was parade-float decoration.

first funeral chapel ever seen in Middleville.

With the withdrawal of Fournet from the company, the Hagenbeck establishment returned to family ownership and has remained so until the present time. From 1865 to 1929 at least three funeral homes attempted to gain a foothold in the city. A firm known as the Middleville Undertaking Company was known to exist in 1899,[28] but is not listed after 1900. A partnership affair, Miller and Dodd, set up an undertaking establishment in Middleville in the early 1920's and introduced the first motorized funeral vehicles to the area. This firm was eventually purchased by the Hagenbecks.[29] The 1924-1925 edition of the Middleville City Directory lists another newcomer to the funeral business, one R. H. McCrory.[30] His name is not found in the next volume of the directory (1926-1927).[31]

SUMMARY

From 1865 until 1929 the Hagenbeck Funeral Home had what amounted to a monopoly in Middleville. No firm seemed able to

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[28]Crittenden's Middleville City Directory (Middleville: Critten Directory Company, Publishers, 1899), I, p. 59.

[29]Even after the purchase of this firm the Hagenbeck Company continued to use horse-drawn equipment for several years.

[30]Ernest H. Miller (comp.) Middleville City Directory (Asheville: Piedmont Directory Corporation, Publishers, 1924) X, p. 492.

[31]Ernest H. Miller (comp.) Middleville City Directory (Asheville: Piedmont Directory Corporation, Publishers, 1926) XI.

successfully compete with them. Because of the peculiar nature of the funeral business a monopoly has even more meaning than in ordinary businesses. In this particular case lower class White people patronized a Middleville Negro funeral home, presumably because they could not afford to call the Hagenbeck Funeral Home. There is no way of determining the real cost of funerals in Middleville during this monopoly period, but all observers are agreed that whatever the cost, it was too high. Ambulance service prices, somewhat less hidden, have been determined to be about ten dollars, although at least two people told the writer that the standard fee was twenty-five dollars.

It must be remembered that this monopoly was established and maintained in an area with a constantly growing population. When it is realized that many funeral directors in small towns operate successfully in population areas of 5,000 persons or less, the importance of the Middleville monopoly becomes evident.

CHAPTER IV

MIDDLEVILLE MORTICIANS: PHASE II, YEARS OF STRUGGLE

The years 1929-1939 will be remembered as years of crisis and struggle for Middleville's morticians. Paradoxically, 1929 was a year of crisis for the nation, the beginning of a long economic struggle which was, as a matter of observation, a significant factor in the mortuary crisis. In some ways there is a striking parallel between the nature of the struggle and the depression itself. This will be explored as the topic is developed.

Phase II in the story of Middleville's morticians can be, in a manner of speaking, traced back to the mortuary career of the man who became the central figure in the crisis.

HOLLISTER, THE REVOLUTIONIZER: EARLY YEARS

Duncan W. Hollister's biographical sketch lists his date of birth as August 4, 1898, and place of birth as Siloam, a small town in the northwestern section of a midwestern state. At an early age, due to the death of their parents, Hollister and a sister were adopted by their grandparents in Western Grove, a little mountain town with a population of 1,551 people[1]

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[1]United States Bureau of the Census, Thirteenth Census of the United States: 1910. Population, Vol. II (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1912), p. 118.

located sixty miles east of Siloam in the same state. The grandfather, Elias Hollister, owner and operator of a furniture store and undertaking concern, harbored ambitions for his grandson in the field of medicine. After graduating from high school in 1915 young Hollister, rebelling against his grandfather's efforts to enroll him in the state university in preparation for a medical career, ran away to Kansas City. When faced with the possibility of being returned to Western Grove, the reluctant scholar insisted that he did not want to go to medical school, rather he wanted to go to embalming school. After considerable haggling Elias Hollister agreed to pay the tuition on the promise that he would "apply himself." In October, 1916, Duncan Hollister graduated from the Missouri School of Embalming in Kansas City. Since the state required a two-year apprenticeship before an embalmer's license could be granted, the graduate applied for and received a job in one of the larger mortuaries in Kansas City. Only six months of the apprenticeship was actually ever served. Like many apprenticeships, he found that he did very little actual work in the trade, but served mainly as a "dirty work" assistant to licensed embalmers. The tasks usually assigned were such things as cleaning up the preparation room, washing the body, sterilizing the instruments, and other tasks equally onerous. In March, 1917, the apprentice embalmer left his apprentice job and enlisted in the United States Army.

On being discharged from the service in June, 1919, he

immediately returned to the Missouri College of Embalming for more schooling. This time the apprenticeship was waived because of his military service and he became a licensed embalmer.

Following the receipt of his license Hollister worked for a funeral home in the southern part of the state and then came back to Western Grove in 1920 to work with his grandfather in the family business. Embalming was a seldom practiced art in Western Grove at that time. In all probability Hollister was the first real embalmer in the region although two others, Louis Klein and Roger Peck, had embalmed a few bodies prior to 1920.[3] As far as is known, neither Klein nor Peck was a graduate of an embalming school. Most of the embalming was done in the home. The embalmer took his "grip" containing two blood bottles, instruments, a supply of arterial and cavity fluid, and some means for circulating the fluids, usually a hand pump of some sort. A folding morgue table, or "cooling board" might also be carried, complete with a rubber sheet for covering.

Hollister began his "revolutionizing" in Western Grove by attempting to change this pattern of home embalming. He

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[3]Hollister is certain that these men did only "cavity" embalming. He believes that he was the first in the region to do arterial embalming. An occasional facial discoloration from their embalming led him to this belief.

persuaded the first family to let him take a body to the funeral home for preparation. The second case was somewhat easier; the person died in a doctor's office. By the time he left Western Grove in 1928 Hollister estimated that about thirty per cent of all cases were being embalmed, and many of these in the funeral home instead of the residence. In addition to this mild "revolution" in the embalming situation other innovations were introduced. Grandfather Elias was persuaded to utilize some property next to the furniture store to build a chapel and a showroom.

The changes mentioned thus far do not reflect some of the trouble that Hollister encountered in effecting them. It was the case of a conservative, relatively unyielding entrepreneur of the old school resisting educated, energetic, and ambitious youth. The situation was made doubly difficult by personal eccentricities that Hollister himself, in reflection today, generously calls "peculiarities," but which some of the older citizens of Western Grove remember and relate in a somewhat different light. If we are to believe those who knew him well, Elias Hollister was perhaps a combination of the traditional stereotype of the undertaker, with some emphasis on the dour side. Typical descriptive comments from elderly citizens who knew him infer that he was a little inclined to be "crabby" or "gripy," and known locally as somewhat of a "character." All remember his tendency to be relatively outspoken, a comparatively

rare trait in that region.

In addition to personal eccentricities, the elder Hollister had the reputation of being a shrewd man in business. More than one respondent gave the writer the distinct impression that he drove a hard bargain. It would seem that he obtained an almost sadistic pleasure out of consummating an unusually sharp transaction. He was not the type of person that is easily changed. Three factors seem to have made progress difficult in the Western Grove situation: (1) extreme traditionalism, accompanied by an avowed distrust of modernization, (2) personal eccentricity, and (3) a tendency toward parsimony. As strange as it may seem, the accumulation of personal wealth did not seem to be overly important, or at least certainly not the most important factor. Apparently he seemed at times not to care whether the business operated, being known to not even open the doors of the furniture store for several days at a time. Some observers believe that the elder Hollister objected to the changes from the economic point of view, but this does not coincide with other facts in the case. For example, he was perfectly willing to pay for an expensive medical education for his grandson, and did pay for his embalming school. There is more support for the traditionalist theory than any other. Mrs. Elva Henry, whose father drove the old horse-drawn hearses for many years, remembers well the insistence upon standard funereal dress for the driver, and the writer himself remembers

that the two old coaches were not sold until long after the death of both Mr. and Mrs. Hollister.[3] Then, too, the personal eccentricities of the old man were scarcely adaptable to the type of funeral service that his grandson had in mind.

In spite of this resistance to change, Duncan Hollister won several points. Already mentioned has been the alteration of physical facilities and the increased practice of embalming, especially embalming in the funeral home as contrasted to the residence. In 1923 the company invested in its first motorized equipment. The new vehicle was not a custom hearse, but rather a seven-passenger sedan with a removable center post.[4] This purchase was not an unmixed blessing. Several Western Grove citizens remember that mechanical difficulties and an occasional flat tire were discouraging. One respondent remembers quite well the embarassment and disgust of the younger Hollister when the new hearse had a flat tire in front of her home on the way to the cemetery.

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[3]The two coaches, one painted gray and the other black, remained in the carriage shed behind the old Hollister residence in Western Grove for several years. The writer, on leave from the Air Force in 1942, observed the old gray hearse, glass side panels and all, being used by a farmer for a vegetable wagon.

[4]This modification was also used by Hollister in Middleville as late as 1940, but in the main for ambulance work. The modification is the same except that a device known as a "cot hanger" is installed to anchor the ambulance cot to the wall of the car. Cars modified in this fashion were especially valuable in branch funeral homes.

In the meanwhile the economic situation in Western Grove had become unstable. A severe strike on the W. and M. T. Railroad, a small 365 mile line with central offices, shops, and roundhouse in the town, had damaged the economic welfare of the community. The strike began in February, 1921 and continued until December, 1923. The immediate result of an attempt on the part of the railroad to lower wages, this prolonged action resulted in the hanging of one striker and the driving out of town of most of the rest by an aroused citizenry. The strike itself remains a classic example of Anglo-Saxon resistance to interference from the outside.[5]

The effects of the strike seem to have been two in number: (1) the railroad payroll, the backbone of the town's economy, was sorely missed, and (2) the people of Western Grove were demonstrated to have been, through isolation and a common heritage, somewhat reluctant to change their habits, customs, and attitudes.

In 1927 Duncan Hollister took complete charge of the Hollister Funeral Home in Western Grove, and the following spring his establishment was one of the heaviest sufferers when a spring flood, occasioned by the overflowing of two small creeks immersed a major portion of the business section

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[5]The writer is indebted to several Western Grove citizens for this general version of the M. and W. T. Railroad strike.

of the town. All but six of the caskets in the showroom were damaged, and the loss was estimated to be in the neighborhood of $2,500.00,[6] a not inconsiderable sum at that time.

THE CHOICE OF AN OPERATION

In his own words, "the desire for a larger operation" motivated Duncan Hollister to seek a new location in the fall of 1928. With no particular place in mind, a casket manufacturer in a border state was consulted for advice concerning possible locations. The manufacturer's advice led to exploratory visits to two cities. In both cities Hollister found ample real estate opportunities and adequate conditions in certain other ways, but was disturbed by what seemed to him to be an unhealthy connection between funeral homes and cemeteries. This seemed to be a distinct disadvantage to anyone coming in from the outside, since it could mean the possibility of being prevented from exercising clear competitive rights, consequently both of these locations were rejected. When a report in the negative was submitted, he was advised to look into the situation in Middleville. While in Middleville making inquiries about real estate and conditions in general, he was informed by a local banker that a Negro funeral home in the city had

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[6] "Little Visits with the Profession," Casket and Sunnyside, LVIII (July, 1928), 14.

for some time been burying white people. A check on the vital statistics showed that in the previous year the Negro funeral home had buried forty persons in that category. This discovery seems to have been the deciding factor. Hollister did not speak of the general economic and cultural factors at this time, although in a public statement some three years later he said that "...he had located in Middleville a little more than two years ago because he had been informed that Middleville was one of the most progressive cities in the South."[7]

The new funeral home was opened in February, 1929,[8] in a small building on Main Street, about two blocks from the center of the city. Announcements regarding the new funeral home began appearing in the Middleville Star and Journal in the business section early in March, and consisted of expanded notices in the business directory section. Under the heading "Established," the text read:

> We are now located and ready to serve. You will find our establishment comfortable and homelike. We render high class Ambulance Service day or night with careful and courteous drivers. Our charges are very reasonable.[9]

The building, according to remarks in one trade journal,

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[7]Middleville Star and Journal, June 5, 1931.

[8]Ibid.

[9]Middleville Star and Journal, March 12, 1929.

occupied "...a completely remodeled residence property."[10] As a location for a funeral home, it was undoubtedly too small for the essential purpose. Compared to later and more commodious locations, one early member of the Hollister team remembers it as a "hole in the wall." Living quarters in the building were maintained for some of the employees, and the initial force consisted of three persons, all embalmers in actual practice, and two of them licensed. All but one of the original five involved in the move (the wives of Hollister and Deutscher included) were from Western Grove and vicinity. The exception was Herschel Freeman, who later became a manager in one of the Hollister branch funeral homes.

In the years that followed many "home town" folks were given the opportunity of working for the Hollister concern. Most of them worked but a short while and then returned to the hills from whence they came. Among these short-lived employees must be included one Roy Crowley, who later became a licensed embalmer and returned to Western Grove where he still embalms for a local funeral home and assists his wife in the operation of a flower shop. Edward Harrison came to Middleville in the late 1930's and worked briefly as an insurance agent before returning to Western Grove to open a restaurant. Letha Fowler, a maiden lady only recently retired from a civil service position, came down in the early years of operation and worked

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[10] "Little Visits with the Profession," Casket and Sunnyside, LIX (July, 1929), 21.

as a secretary. Robert Brown came down in 1939 and worked for almost a year as an ambulance attendant before moving on to a better paying job.

Some of the "Daniel County" people were more permanent fixtures, however. Such a couple were the Gerald O. Dodges, who came to Middleville in June, 1934 and, along with the Deutschers provided a stable cadre around which the organization was constructed. The Dodges, not actually from Hollister's home town, had been operating a furniture store and undertaking establishment for the Hollister family in Belleville, a small town some twenty miles from Western Grove. Mr. Dodge, although unlicensed, was a capable embalmer who eventually received his license under revised regulations passed in later years. Mrs. Dodge served as secretary to Hollister and also worked in the insurance department.

BUILDING THE BUSINESS

The funeral business is one of the most difficult of all organizations to establish. There are many reasons for this, not the least of which is the fact that, because of the nature of the business itself, and the semi-professionality of its ethics, advertising is considered to be in poor taste by most, and by some downright unethical. Hollister had no choice in the matter when he came to Middleville. With limited financial resources, he could ill afford the time that it might take to

establish the business in the traditional manner. In the very beginning he began to promote the Hollister Funeral Home by the use of techniques and methods that defied convention. As indicated previously, simple business notices in the papers were elaborated, and the content of these messages raised the basic issues that had confronted Middleville citizens for some time. One of the first problems attacked was the high cost of funerals. One month after the new funeral home opened its doors for business he was informing the public about "The Cost of Service:"

> The cost of our service is as low as is consistent with the best of merchandise and the most careful attention to details.
>
> We help the bereaved family to avoid unnecessary expense, but we make no compromise with the quality of goods or the thoroughness of our work. All prices we quote represent honest value in supplies and services.[11]

In the beginning Hollister had advertised day and night ambulance service. By July, a little over four months after the funeral home was opened for business, he added a private ambulance to his equipment to take care of the ambulance business that accrued from this new service.[12] In a later notice attention was paid to the "personal service" aspect of the funeral business. In this manner he called attention to

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[11] Middleville Star and Journal, March 22, 1929.

[12] Middleville Star and Journal, July 1, 1929.

the fact that the attendants at the Hollister Funeral Home were "...thoroughly experienced, courteous, and efficient."[13] From the beginning the ambulance drivers and attendants wore white coats and military style white caps. The caps were discarded shortly afterwards but the white coats were worn up until the Second World War when curtailment of linen service made them difficult to obtain. The "training" given to attendants was limited to "in service" type training, but weekly meetings of the staff were held for the express purpose of improving the service through the correction of mistakes and the employment of new ideas and suggestions. These meetings, not too affectionately called "kangaroo courts" by the employees, were conducted by Hollister himself. To "encourage" participation, individuals who did not produce a new idea, or through observation find some operational procedure that could be improved, was kept "after school" until the information was produced.

In the same class with "trained attendants" but on a somewhat different level was the Hollister advocacy of the "lady assistant." This position on the staff, occupied by Mrs. Hollister, was noted frequently in early publicity about the Funeral Home. Apparently she was used very seldom in this capacity, despite her own good intentions, and, we are told, frequent complaints on her part at not being informed when female bodies or children

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[13] Middleville Star and Journal, July 17, 1929.

were brought in. This concern for and the provision of a lady assistant had roots stemming from the early 1900's and was largely the result of efforts to reassure a misinformed, highly suspicious public that their loved ones were in good hands.

In August, 1929, Hollister did the unusual by informing the people of Middleville exactly how Hollister funerals were priced. In a notice entitled "No Secret," he explained how the cost of a funeral service was fixed by the same principles that governed the charges of other reputable commercial institutions:

> The cost of the funeral is merely the cost of the merchandise with a reasonable profit, the charge for our services and the use of our equipment. Every article is marked in plain figures in our showroom. Whether the funeral is simple or elaborate, we give adequate service at a fair price.[14]

In the same month he publicly demonstrated metal grave vaults in the funeral home, emphasising the protection afforded by these receptacles in watersoaked land. The demonstration "...caused much favorable comment, both in word-of-mouth advertising, and in the newspapers."[15] On August 12, 1929, Hollister again received mention in the newspaper when he became the area dealer for a prominent line of metal caskets.[16]

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[14] Middleville Star and Journal, August 7, 1929.

[15] "Little Visits with the Profession," Casket and Sunnyside, LIX (September, 1929), 16.

[16] See Appendix A.

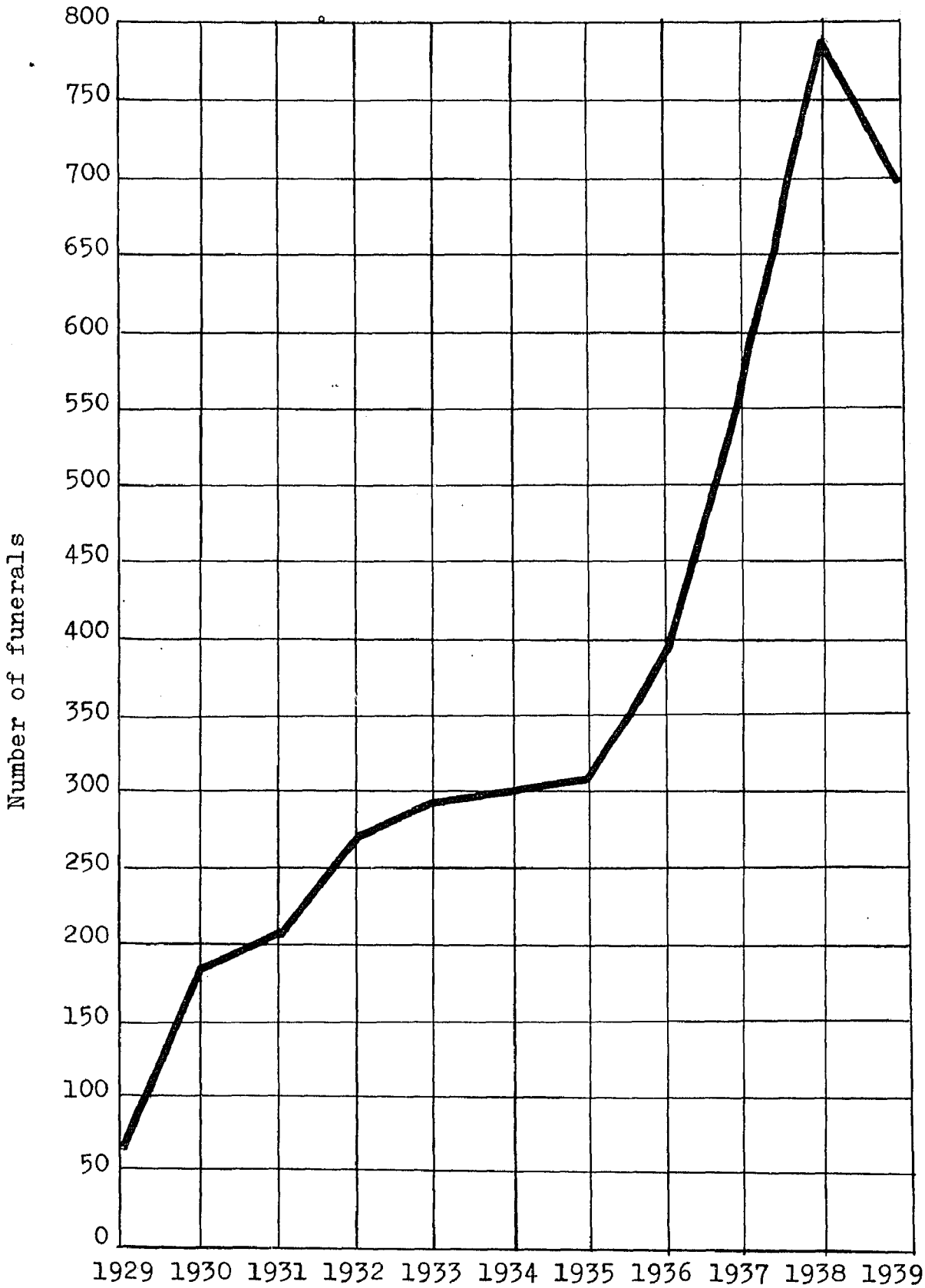

FIGURE 2

NUMBER OF FUNERALS CONDUCTED BY THE
HOLLISTER FUNERAL HOME, 1929-1939
(Source: Personal files of Mr. D. W. Hollister.)

In their first year of operation the Hollister "team" of Mrs. Hollister, Herman Deutscher, Herschel Freeman, and Hollister himself, conducted fifty-seven funerals in the Middleville area. When compared to the totals in other years, this number seems small, but in actuality a considerable proportion of small town funeral directors all over the country must be satisfied with less than seventy-five funerals a year. Considering the time that is ordinarily required to establish a funeral business on a sound footing in a given locality, this figure of fifty-seven funerals for the first year of operation seems remarkable.

The following year Hollister continued to build the business through personal contact in clubs, civic organizations, churches, and fraternal orders. A series of articles in the newspaper brought requests for the use of these articles from funeral directors in other parts of the country. It was in this year that lateral expansion of the funeral home began. By the end of September, 1930, two branch funeral homes had been established. One of these, located at Centertown, was nothing more than a house with a small stock of caskets. All funerals from this branch were handled from the home office in Middleville, some fifteen miles away. The other branch was located in Charlesville, forty miles from Middleville. This branch, located in a growing city eventually became one of the better of the Hollister extensions. With the exception of times when, for one reason or another, managers could not be obtained, Charlesville

was operated as a self-sustaining unit. It became one of the choice posts in the Hollister organization, and some of the longer managerial terms were in evidence there.

In 1930 a problem developed that constituted a threat to all funeral businesses in Middleville. The appearance on the scene of "burial associations" from out of the immediate area brought some concern to Middleville morticians. There were organizations of this type in the southern part of the state, but they had not at this point ranged northward in search of business, being content to work the Metropolitan City area. Two association-type organizations filtered down into the Middleville area, one an out-of-state group, and the other from a city in the northern part of the state. The more vigorous of the two was the latter, the Southern Cooperative Burial Association. Agents from this association sold enough burial policies in the short span of one year to disturb Hollister. He had in the beginning cooperated with the group to the extent that he had contracted to service their policies in the Middleville area. By the end of 1931 it had become obvious that because of the depression economy and the low-rate, broad coverage features of the policies, burial associations were becoming both needed and wanted. It had also become very obvious that outside forces were undermining the Middleville territory, taking money out of the area and exercising discount control at the same time over funeral homes that serviced the

policies.

While the burial association movement was causing some concern, the funeral home itself was making rapid strides. On April 1, 1931 it was moved from cramped quarters on Main Street to a more spacious location on Milwaukee Avenue, recently vacated by the competitor concern, Hagenbeck. This company had announced the intention of building a new funeral home shortly after the Hollister organization opened for business in Middleville, and while the new structure was not completed until the latter part of June, 1932, a move was made in that direction. This concern occupied temporary quarters for over a year while the building was being completed. There is some indication that the move from the funeral home on Milwaukee Avenue was not voluntary, and thus premature. One rather plainly put explanation has it that they had a "falling out" with the owner of the building and were forced to move.

From April 1 until the early part of June, 1931, the Milwaukee Avenue property underwent a complete remodeling. On June 5, 1931 a double full page advertisement appeared in the Middleville Star and Journal. The announcement of the opening of the new funeral home consisted of pictures of both Mr. and Mrs. Hollister, a picture of a new Hupmobile ambulance recently obtained, sketches of various parts of the newly redecorated structure, plus congratulatory messages from some of the firms that had been involved in the process of redecoration of the

home.[17] It was described in glowing terms as the most modern funeral home in the state, with the most up-to-date equipment and facilities. The service motive was stressed throughout, with emphasis on nominal cost of funerals and the consistent quality of the service.[18]

In the same issue of the Middleville paper, printed as a regular news item, additional information was provided about Hollister's concept of service. Included in this report was a reassertion that the funeral home had not catered to any particular class of trade, but had tried to please everyone.[19] It also noted the recent incorporation of the business, and while not stated in the article, Herman Deutscher was involved in the corporate proceedings, becoming vice-president of the firm.

Shortly after the opening of the new funeral home, Hollister let it be known that he would give a grave marker without charge to anyone who would notify him of the location of an unmarked grave. He made it clear in the announcement that no one receiving the free grave markers would be in any way embarassed or placed under obligation.[20]

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[17]See Appendix A.

[18]Middleville Star and Journal, June 5, 1931.

[19]Ibid.

[20]"Little Visits with the Profession," Casket and Sunnyside, LXI (July, 1931), 25.

In order to familiarize residents of Middleville with a new telephone number, changed from 816 to 850, the "time service" feature was added to the Hollister advertising scheme in 1931. Announcements were made concerning this service in local newspapers and for several years, in fact until a dial telephone system was installed in Middleville, 850 was perhaps the best known telephone number in the city.

The end of the year 1931 brought with it a decision that had been in the making for some time. It was at this time that Hollister decided to form his own burial association and counter the invasion of the Southern Cooperative Burial Association and the out-of-state firm. On January 6, 1932, the Middleville Internment Association was formed. This association, not greatly different from other burial associations except for the ambulance service provision, was established at a meeting of the board of directors that set up the rules, regulations, and by-laws of the association.[21]

For an initiation fee of two dollars (which included the first month's dues) and monthly dues of one dollar, the Middleville Internment Association agreed to furnish a funeral service consisting of a cloth-covered cypress casket (grey crepe), outside case, embalming, hearse service, and a complete service that included the making of arrangements, conducting of the funeral,

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[21]Document from the personal files of Mr. D. W. Hollister.

transferring the remains, obtaining of death and burial permits, use of the funeral chapel, flower racks, folding chairs and other necessary equipment. The body also agreed to be responsible for the inserting of the death notice in the newspaper and for the furnishing of floral acknowledgement cards.[22]

Special provisions were made in the by-laws for children's funerals, depending upon the age of the child. The by-laws further provided that the funeral service should be furnished by the Association itself, or such party as it might designate, with no responsibility assumed for services employed outside of the organization. Ambulance service was to be rendered within a radius of ten miles of Middleville, with a moderate charge being made for service outside of the designated limits.[23]

A very important provision of the by-laws was that which made the certificate cover the entire family. This provision was limited to husband, wife, and minor children residing under the same roof and dependent upon the father for support. Any children born to the head of the family would be added to the certificate free. The organization protected itself by making automatic the termination of the policy upon the death of any member of the insured group, with the renewal of membership being

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[22] Ibid.

[23] Ibid.

at the option of the Association. The regulations further provided that a person who had been a regular member for ten years could drop his membership and still receive an allowance of one-hundred dollars on his funeral without the payment of further dues, but that this provision would apply only to the person holding the certificate and to no other member of the family.[24]

When officers of the Middleville Internment Association were elected, Hollister was named president, John E. Madison vice-president, and E. H. Klippstein secretary. Madison, the first insurance agent for the Southern Cooperative Burial Association to come to the Middleville area, left that organization to work with Hollister. As vice-president he was also manager of the affairs of the Middleville Internment Association.

In April, 1932 the Charlesville branch of the Hollister Funeral Home was completely remodeled and made into a completely equipped funeral home. A short time later, in July, the Hagenbeck Funeral Home moved into their newly completed building on Capitol Avenue. A picture of this new edifice appeared in the July issue of one of the trade journals and indicated that the new home, completed at the cost of $32,000.00, contained twenty-eight rooms, four halls, and several baths.[25]

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[24] Ibid. See Appendix B.

[25] "Little Visits with the Profession," Casket and Sunnyside, LXII (July, 1932), 21.

The year 1933 saw a major development that was to have extensive and long term consequences for the funeral business in Middleville. The Middleville Internment Association, in operation slightly over a year, was replaced with a reserve-type industrial insurance company.[26] The free ambulance service that had been offered with the association certificates was made a part of the new insurance policy structure and became one of the prime selling features. This meant that ambulance equipment for funeral homes servicing these policies had to be increased in order to give adequate service, consequently Hollister added another straight ambulance to the fleet in June, 1933.[27]

THE CRUCIAL YEAR

The developmental narrative should be interrupted at this point to look briefly at a declining organization. The Hagenbeck Funeral Home, for some sixty-five years the only continuing firm in the city, had never experienced the kind of competition that it had begun to see in 1929. With what amounted to a monopoly, its operators had seldom worried about measures to promote the business. The spring of 1929 brought these days of complacency to an end. The tradition-bound system was challenged on several

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[26]There are conflicting stories concerning this change from the Association type of burial insurance to the Industrial type. See page 109.

[27]"News of Industry Over the States," Southern Funeral Director, XXIX (July, 1933), 34.

fronts. The old company, seemingly stunned by the rapidity of the moves, followed suit, albeit reluctantly, on almost every move that Hollister made. When, for example, day and night ambulance service was offered for three dollars,[28] Hagenbeck soon added the same price to his business directory notices. In February, 1931, the "day and night" provisions were added to Hagenbeck notices,[29] whereas from the very beginning this had been a strong point in the Hollister program. When the Reliable Industrial Insurance Company was formed on March 10, 1933, following a year of experience with the Middleville Internment Association, the Hagenbeck interests followed suit some three months later by establishing the Burial Benefit Association.[30]

Figure 2 graphically points to the source of the crisis that faced the Hagenbeck Funeral Home. From 1929 through 1932 the Hollister concern had taken progressively larger proportions of the funeral business. If we assume that the Hagenbeck Funeral Home had a monopoly prior to 1929, then all 292 funerals that Hollister conducted in 1933 were literally taken away from the old line company. Some of this may be qualified when it is

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[28]This was the fee for a trip within the city limits.

[29]Middleville Star and Journal, February 9, 1931.

[30]Information from records provided by the Blank State Insurance Commission.

understood that Hollister might very well have taken some of the lower class funerals from the Negro funeral home. In fact, it is reasonable to assume that this was an early source of supply for the new concern. It must also be understood that the two Hollister branch funeral homes are included in this figure, and one of those, Charlesville, was out of the operational area covered by the Hagenbeck business. Even with these qualifications it is not difficult to understand the Hagenbeck decline. If we take the figure 292 and allow one-third for branch funeral homes and lower class transfers from the Negro funeral home, an imposing figure still remains. Not many funeral homes in cities the size of Middleville can lose 195 funerals in a year and still maintain normal operation.

Almost everyone who knows about the situation, including Hollister himself, agrees that 1933 was a crucial year for the funeral business in Middleville. Around this crisis situation has grown one of the most interesting, if unverifiable, tales that has come out of the city's mortuary history. Although the writer has heard the story from several different sources, there is little agreement on the "facts" involved. The context within which the story originated may have some basis in fact, but there is no way of ascertaining how much is fact and how much of it has come from the imagination of a few people who had some slight connection with the funeral homes involved. The event, which supposedly took place in 1933, set the conditions in this

manner: The Hagenbeck Funeral Home was supposedly deeply in debt, (1) to an upstate individual who held a mortgage on the property, and (2) to a Metropolitan City casket company who had extended credit to the firm in the form of merchandise. The story has it that Hollister, hearing that the mortgage was for sale, arrnaged to borrow the money and set off upstate to deliver the coup de grace, only to arrive too late.

In all probability there is very little truth in the story, but it is still remembered. Hollister flatly denies ever having had the opportunity to purchase the Hagenbeck Funeral Home. It is general knowledge, however, that the old line organization was in poor condition financially. It is not possible to conceal the decline in the volume of business, and observers point out that there were periods of time during the crucial year when the Hollister organization conducted several times as many funerals as the Hagenbeck establishment. One person remembers a particular month in which Hollister's firm conducted thirty funerals to four for Hagenbeck. Just how critical the situation actually was is something that is known only to a few people, and is seldom discussed. Max Rogers, who had assumed management of the firm in 1932, has indicated that they were on the point of bankruptcy. Hollister remembers that he "got almost all" of the funerals conducted for a considerable period of time in 1933.

To further illustrate the seriousness of the financial

crisis at this time, the writer was shown a newspaper clipping which listed property for sale on Capitol Avenue and other streets near the funeral home. The clipping was not dated, but the possessor was certain that this property listed for sale by the Hagenbecks was made available in 1933 or 1934. One employee for the company during the crisis years told the writer that the credit rating of the establishment was so low that gasoline for funeral cars or ambulances could not be purchased on credit.

The nature of the recovery of the Hagenbeck Funeral Home is not known in detail, but two things seem likely to have played dominant roles: (1) strict management under the supervision of Max Rogers, sent to Middleville by one of the Hagenbeck creditors to protect their investment, and (2) the successful development of a "cushion" of funerals from industrial insurance policyholders. One person reports hearing one of the Hagenbecks say that it was the insurance that saved the company.

THE MADISON AFFAIR: FIRST MAJOR SCHISM

The first major schism in the Hollister Funeral Home came during a period of rapid expansion. In 1934 a new branch funeral home had been opened in Samsburg. This new unit was formally opened in August with Herschel Freeman, one of the

original employees, as manager.[31] Another branch home was opened in this same period of time at Old River, a small town about thirty miles from Middleville. This branch was opened almost on impulse. Hollister had taken a summary look at the town and decided that it was a good place for a branch funeral home. After renting a house in the town he came back to the home office in Middleville and offered the management of the new branch to Gerald Dodge, who refused. Eventually the Old River branch became one of the better units in the Hollister chain.

More progress was in evidence in the home office. In addition to the new ambulance purchased earlier in the year to help accomodate the ever increasing ambulance business, a new hearse was also obtained. Utilizing a new Wick Organ that had been installed in the funeral chapel, a series of Sunday afternoon concerts were inaugurated in November.[32] In 1935 this same organ was used to broadcast a series of fifteen-minute radio programs.

The first of two major schisms in the Hollister system came in 1935, and concerned the departure from the organization of John E. Madison. Madison had come to Middleville in October,

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[31]"News of the Industry Over the States," Southern Funeral Director, XXX (April, 1934), 43-44.

[32]"News of the Industry Over the States," Southern Funeral Director, XXXI (November, 1934), 40.

1931, as a representative of the Southern Cooperative Burial Association. An ordained minister of the Christian Church,[33] he had received his education at a small college in a southeastern mountain state, following which he had spent some three and one-half years in the pastoral ministry. According to his widow, he felt himself called to be an evangelist, not a pastor, hence the following several years were spent with a central organization of the church in the capacity of an evangelist. In 1930, tired of much traveling and not desiring pastoral work, literally "worn out" from protracted revival services in a physically and emotionally taxing occupation, he "retired" from the evangelical ministry and sought employment in other fields. From near Cincinnati, Ohio he had brought his family to the northern part of the state where he had become affiliated with the Southern Cooperative Burial Association. Early in 1931 Madison made a provisional trip to Middleville to look into the possibilities of establishing an office for Southern Cooperative Burial Association in the area. His initial impressions satisfactory, he sent for his family and began to sell burial insurance in the territory.

The funeral home selected to service these burial policies was the Hollister Funeral Home, at that time in its third year of operation in Middleville. Madison actually sold Southern

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[33]Not to be confused with the Church of Christ. The denomination referred to is more accurately called "Disciples of Christ," or simply "Disciples."

Cooperative Burial Association policies for a very short time. In January, 1932, he agreed to join Hollister and another Middleville business man, E. H. Klippstein, in the establishing of a local burial association, of which he was subsequently made manager.

There are no records available for the results of that one year of work under the plan drawn up by Hollister, Madison, and Klippstein, but the impression is received that promotional efforts on the part of Madison were reasonably successful. To bolster claims for success, one respondent asserted at this point that it was successful enough that the Hagenbeck Funeral Home sought to have legislation passed making the association illegal. Even though the legislation failed, the association-type organization was to have a brief life. On March 10, 1933, it was replaced by the Reliable Industrial Insurance Company. Madison was carried over as manager of the new company, although there are indications that he and Hollister had differences of opinion about this. According to Hollister, Madison wanted to stick to the old association-type burial policies, while he, Hollister, wanted to push the new legal-reserve-type of insurance with its broader application and more protection for the policy-holder. The Madison side of the controversy, supported by his widow and son, contends that the state itself urged all of the associations to convert to legal reserve companies.

This disagreement has been reported as the basis for

Madison's departure. Reports indicate that there were other areas of disagreement as well. There are at least three factors that seem to have been involved other than the basic disagreement concerning the insurance-association change. In the first place, some observers feel that even at this early stage of development, Hollister sensed the limitations of his first manager. Madison's main strength lay in the cultivation of rural folk, at which he was admittedly somewhat of an expert. The operation envisioned a much larger conception than it is thought Madison could encompass. In the second place there were evidences of non-cooperation with some of the policies of the company, some of which involved personal demeanor. Other observers see jealousy involved, and with it indicate that Madison was "making a go of it," "doing too well for himself," or was "taking too much of Hollister's money." A third opinion from an entirely different source suggested that in the activities of the Hollister organization the ex-minister perceived things that were contrary to his personal life philosophy. Conditioned, as his life had been, in years spent in an evangelical ministry, this seems a reasonable conclusion, although in all fairness, and as has been indicated previously, some of his own actions have also been questioned.

The Madison Funeral Home was established in May, 1935, in a small and inadequate location some eight blocks east of the downtown section of Middleville. The original structure

was modified very little, "just a partition here and there." The Madison Service Insurance Company was founded at the same time, although it made its first annual report to the Blank State Insurance Commission in 1938.[34]

Observers have indicated that in all probability the Madison Service Insurance Company was at the outset based on the founder's ability to re-write policies that had been originally written for the Reliable Industrial Insurance Company, the Hollister organization. The operation of the Madison Funeral Home was a cooperative enterprise involving Madison, his wife and son. Neither father nor son was trained professionally for the funeral business, nor was either actually inclined in that direction. For that matter, neither had the insurance business been a matter of training or inclination, although Madison had sold insurance to help finance his college education.

The Madison Funeral Home's decade of operation, 1935 to 1945, is one of the most interesting, if depressing, in the history of Middleville's funeral homes. From the beginning the operation was makeshift, especially when compared to the other two funeral homes. Three more or less distinct phases can be seen in its development. The first, or formative stage, seems

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[34] Annual Report of the Insurance Department of the Secretary of State for the Year 1938, p. 105.

to have been characterized by the insistence upon the quick establishment of the insurance business. In the first place the funeral home seems to have been almost a necessary evil in order to have an agency for the servicing of the insurance policies. In the second phase, beginning about 1940, shows some reversal of phase one, albeit very little. In this year the funeral home moved four blocks west of the original location to a substantial, if slightly archaic, residence property. Most observers agree that the new property was more than adequate had it been properly utilized. Again only minor changes were even attempted in the property. A third or final phase may be noted in which some expansion is attempted. A branch office was opened in Grimmston, some thirty miles from Middleville during this phase. This branch home, as the writer can testify from personal knowledge, was little more than an ambulance station and a parlor.

The chief characteristics of the funeral home in all three phases seems to have been: (1) unskilled operation, (2) close financial management, and (3) catering to rural and lower class people. Former employees of the firm, working for other funeral homes were frequently heard to comment upon the ineptness with which the funeral home was operated. There seems to have been no systematic operational procedure followed, and observers have wondered indeed whether such was desired. As in his former occupation, Madison did as much as possible himself and scorned

outside assistance.[35] He is known to have, on occasions, preached the funeral sermon in the absence of a minister, rendered an appropriate vocal solo, and at the same time served in the capacity of a funeral director.[36] His visits in rural areas for the purpose of selling insurance were, as one of his employees recalls, much like pastoral calls. It was not at all uncommon, this respondent remembers, for him to go out in the country on an insurance trip and come back loaded down with vegetables, fruit, eggs, and other types of rural produce. The funeral home, it would seem, was operated more or less in the lower realms of the personal service level and at the opposite polar extreme from the professional types.

Perhaps the most obvious characteristic was close financial management. This factor was observed in many ways, ranging from small salaries to employees to second-hand tires for the rolling stock. Employees, mostly young boys from rural areas who needed a job in the city, were paid low wages even for a depression period. The standard wage was six dollars per week plus room and board.[37] For comparative purposes, the pay

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[35]As an evangelist he had always worked alone, and never with a singer.

[36]As will be seen, this "jack-of-all-trades" tendency was not confined to Madison himself, but is also observed as a characteristic trait in his son.

[37]In this case "board" meant eating with the Madison family.

scale at the Hollister Funeral Home was seven dollars and fifty cents per week for part-time employees. The latter, however, did not benefit from the "board" provision, although their quarters were furnished in the funeral home. Madison employees did not have regular days off, whereas Hollister employees worked only every other night and alternate Sundays. Semi-transient embalmers were employed,[38] with an occasional recent graduate of embalming school a part of the pattern. Eventually Charles Madison, the son of the proprietor, learned to embalm and helped the family cause.

No employee can ever remember a new funeral car being purchased. Charles Madison did practically all of the repair work on these cars, an operation that for a time was carried on in a temporary tent behind the funeral home and on other occasions under the large oak trees in the yard. Seldom were the cars in good running condition, a fact not alone attributable to second-hand origin, but as Charles himself attests, to poor driving habits of young, sometimes irresponsible employees.[39] Employees were constantly embarassed by mechanical failures, and having to be "pushed off" because of a dead battery or other difficulties became a standard cause for complaint. In 1939

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[38]Madison employees called them "jack-leg" embalmers.

[39]Some of the employees were very young. Madison found it difficult to keep his more capable attendants because of the low rate of pay and long hours. Several members of his staff were able to get better pay and more favorable working conditions at the other funeral homes.

the Madison garage contained the following cars: (1) a 1932 model Cadillac Sedan with the center post removable for use as an ambulance, (2) a 1935 model Ford Ambulance, (3) a 1935 model Pontiac Combination,[40] and (4) a 1937 model Chevrolet Combination. As funeral homes go, these are "cheap" cars. In 1939 they contrasted sharply with the Buick fleet maintained by Hollister and the Hagenbeck Packards.

Madison maintained a small showroom containing for the most part a reasonably good selection of wood caskets and a few metals. Most of the caskets were in the cheaper price ranges, and he was forced to go to a competitor's showroom if he needed a higher priced casket. On this type of business he always dealt with Hagenbeck, from whom he also occasionally borrowed a hearse.

Close financial management also evidenced itself in the purchase of any type of equipment. In short, nothing that could be obtained second-hand was ever purchased as new stock. This system made the preparation room critically inadequate and kept the rolling stock in a constant state of disrepair. As one respondent remembered, "about the only things that we had new were caskets and shrouds."

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[40] A "combination" car is one that can be used either as a funeral coach or an ambulance.

Undoubtedly the Madison enterprise catered to the rural folk and to lower socio-economic groups. The nature of the enterprise made this almost inevitable, and the character of the operator made it desirable. His fondness for rural people with their religious fundamentalism inclined the business in that direction. The level of his merchandising aspirations tend to indicate that he seldom anticipated anything but low and lower middle class funerals.

John Madison died in June, 1945, after a short illness. If we accept the testimony of his widow and son he died a bitter, disappointed man. Several things are offered in explanation of this, but primarily they seem to center around a long series of disappointments, and, as his son succinctly put it, "man's inhumanity to man." The Madison Funeral Home, established in depression years, found that the character of their clientele seemed to change in the prosperous periods of the early war years. Charles contends even today that his father was "too soft-hearted for his own good," and claims to have burned a considerable number of unpaid accounts from the war years.

John Madison represents somewhat of a paradox on the Middleville mortuary scene. This is seldom recognized because the attempts to quantify and objectively analyze empirical data quite often obscure many latent factors. Objectively--and often critically--his former employees remember him as a somewhat

sour, eccentric person, a "good old man" with a weakness for rodeos and big league baseball. One suspects that his attempts to be a "father" to all of the boys were resented. One also suspects that the boys were somewhat embarassed by the type of situation they found, and that they were all too often prone to judge that situation in terms of what they saw and heard about other funeral homes. It is undeniable that they felt like "country cousins" or "poor relations" on the whole. When employees at Hollister's complained about long hours, poor pay, and an occasional instance of injustice on the part of the management, they could be certain to hear admonishment to the effect that they should be thankful that they were not working for "old man Madison."

The other, and seldom recognized side of the Madison story, seems to be that beneath the queer, eccentric, sometimes debatable behavior lay latent resistance to change. A conservatism, born of religion and strengthened in its evangelistic espousal, would seem to be the basis for this. He seemed not interested in the funeral business as such, but in people, simple, earthy people that were the type that he had no doubt known in his evangelistic work. The administration of the business and techniques of the profession were, so it seems, of little concern. One might posit in this instance the probability of a "low order of calling," or, and even more probable, an unsuccessful attempt to transfer an earlier

calling.

In retrospect, two things seem sociologically important in the consideration of the Madison Funeral Home. In the first place it probably came into being as a result of the insurance business and became virtually an accessory after the fact of insurance. In the second place the operation was, from all reports, so thoroughly makeshift as to present the appearance of eternal temporariness, which, one suspects, probably reflects something of the type of people serving and being served.

YEARS OF EXPANSION

The main impact of Madison's departure from the Hollister concern was felt in the insurance department. There are those who believe that Madison rapidly converted a substantial number of Reliable Industrial Insurance policies shortly after he began his own business. There is no way of knowing how much of this was actually done, but there was a marked decline in the premium income of the Reliable Industrial Insurance Company for the two years immediately following the schism.[41] This drop in premium income could have been the result of any number of factors, and possibly one of them might have been the loss of policyholders to the newly created Madison organization.

In August, 1935, the expansion of the Hollister system

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[41]See Figure 3.

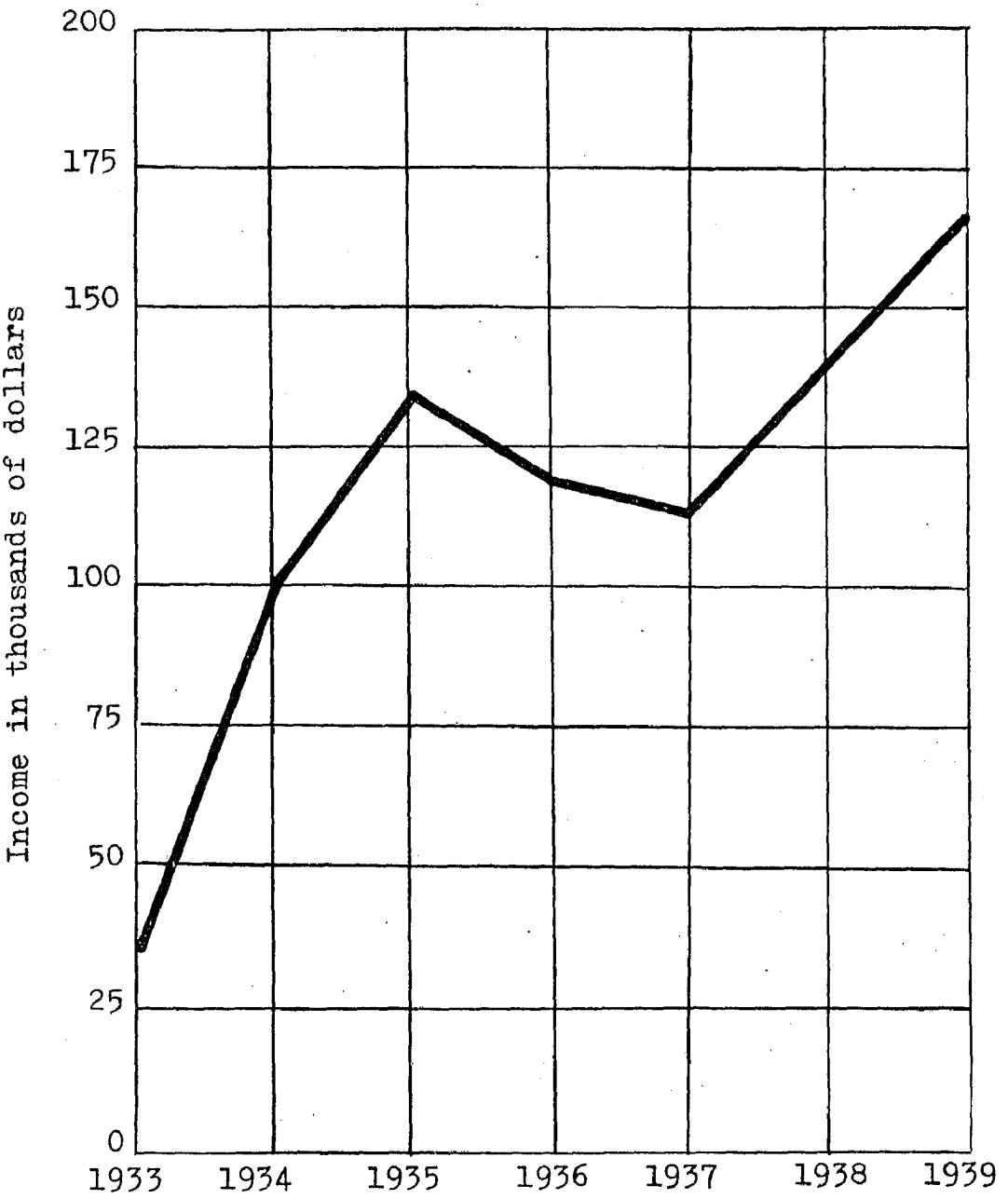

FIGURE 3

PREMIUM INCOME, THE RELIABLE INDUSTRIAL INSURANCE COMPANY, 1933-1939
(Source: Personal files of Mr. D. W. Hollister.)

continued with the establishing of a funeral home in Columbia, the largest city in the state to receive a Hollister branch.[42] The year 1936 saw two more funeral homes added to the chain, Paris in January,[43] and Jamesville in March.[44] In the same year the branch in Charlesville was moved to a better location and a five-year lease was obtained on the property.[45]

In 1937 J. T. Holland, a licensed embalmer, was sent to open a new Hollister Funeral Home in Newport.[46] Holland was eventually transferred to the Old River branch where he became one of the few "permanent" fixtures in the system. In July of this year the Paris branch was moved to a new and better location,[47] and on October 16 another new branch was opened in Orangeburg.[48]

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[42] "News of the Industry Over the States," Southern Funeral Director, XXXIII (August, 1935), 41.

[43] "News of the Industry Over the States," Southern Funeral Director, XXXIV (February, 1936), 42.

[44] "News of the Industry Over the States," Southern Funeral Director, XXXIV (April, 1936), 40.

[45] "News of the Industry Over the States," Southern Funeral Director, XXXV (November, 1936), 46.

[46] "News of the Industry Over the States," Southern Funeral Director, XXXVII (July, 1937), 34.

[47] "News of the Industry Over the States," Southern Funeral Director, XXXVII (August, 1937), 34.

[48] "News of the Industry Over the States," Southern Funeral Director, XXXVII (November, 1937), 43.

In the meantime the Hagenbeck Funeral Home continued to gain strength after the disastrous years in the early part of the 1930-1940 decade. In 1937 several new cars were purchased to renew a considerable portion of the rolling stock, among them a new ambulance, a new service car, two seven-passenger limousines, and two new funeral coaches.[49] It is interesting in this connection to observe that with regard to the purchase of rolling stock all three companies presently being discussed seem to have operated with a different philosophy in mind. Hagenbeck, for example, seemed to change the whole fleet at one time, or as many cars as possible. The advantage in this seems to have been uniformity in appearance. Hollister, on the other hand, seems to have preferred buying a new piece of equipment each year, sending the older out-of-date equipment to the branch funeral homes, and the oldest to the Negro funeral home owned by the company.[50] The philosophy here seems to have been one of always being able to have at least one unit of the most modern and up-to-date equipment available for those occasions that seemed to demand it. Not only did this make good advertising copy,[51] but it was also adaptable to the chain system of operation.

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[49] "News of the Industry Over the States," Southern Funeral Director, XXXVI (May, 1937), 35.

[50] This funeral home serviced insurance policies sold to Negroes by Hollister insurance agents.

[51] See Appendix A.

For a considerable period of time after the purchase of a new hearse or ambulance, its use was always strictly limited. As it ceased to be a new car, it would gradually be put into general use, and, having aged a few years and descended a few rungs down the age and model ladder, it would be reconditioned and sent to one of the branch funeral homes for use under any and all conditions. At any given time in 1941 a well-ordered array of vehicles might be observed in the Hollister garage in the rear of the funeral home.[52] The three straight ambulances would be arrayed in order of age and type of service intended. The oldest ambulance was always used first in emergencies, where there was the most likelihood of its being wrecked. The newest ambulance in the fleet was always kept in the city whenever possible, to be used when the patient being carried was someone of civic importance, or a person living in the better residential areas. The middle bracket car in terms of age made most of the long trips. The combination was an all-purpose vehicle, one that would on occasions be used for a rural ambulance call or funeral, to pick up a body, or carry flowers to the cemetery. The front office might "hold" a call for a considerable period of time to avoid any radical adjustment in the order of usage of cars.

The other funeral home, Madison, seemed to have one basic philosophy; take the car that is running and most likely

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[52]See Figure 4.

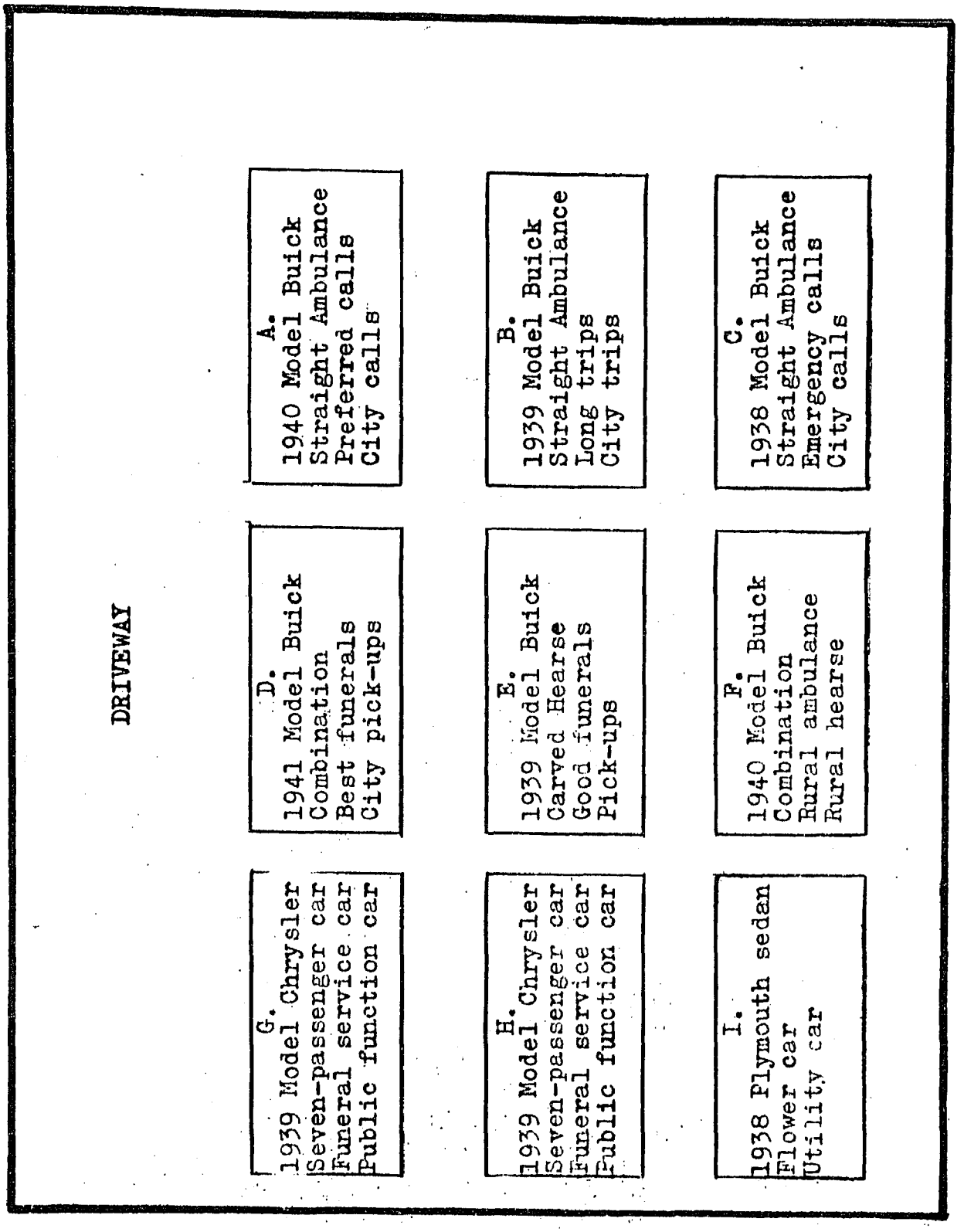

FIGURE 4

ALIGNMENT AND DUTY ORDER OF FUNERAL AND SERVICE VEHICLES, THE HOLLISTER FUNERAL HOME, 1941

to make the trip without mechanical difficulty.

The Hollister system in all of its expansiveness came to its peak in this period. Funeral homes were opened in Greenwood, Homeland, and Camden, bringing the total to thirteen, probably the largest system that the immediate area has known.

SUMMARY

Phase II in the story of Middleville's morticians is seen as characterized by the ending of a monopoly period and the rise to power of a new competitor, resulting in the near demise of Middleville's oldest funeral home. Industrial insurance, a new and pervasive instrument for expansion and growth, is pictured growing out of the association movement. A prominent feature of this phase is the development of the Hollister chain system of funeral homes in the Middleville area. The first of two schisms in the Hollister organization is seen as resulting in a short-lived enterprise based in the main upon the servicing of industrial insurance and not on the funeral function.

CHAPTER V

MIDDLEVILLE MORTICIANS:
PHASE III, THE ERA OF STABILIZATION

Wartimes are trying times for funeral homes, and especially so when the organizational structure is complex and heavily dependent upon a certain type of personnel. War is also difficult from the standpoint of the scarcity of quality goods, but this is also experienced in the general culture, as is the labor problem. The problem of personnel, however, has special significance for the type of organization that was established by Duncan Hollister.

When the Hollister Funeral Home was established in 1929, the country was beginning to feel the effects of an economic depression that lasted well into the 1930's. Jobs were hard to get, especially in parts of the country other than Middleville, and Hollister was able to get a quality of employee that, in all probability, would not have been possible in times of economic prosperity. Because "a job was a job," people were willing to work long hours without thought of extra pay. Then, too, Hollister was advantaged in having a solid cadre of "Daniel County" personnel around which to build. Herman Deutscher, personally trained in the technical skills of the business by Hollister, became a prime force for stabilization. Gerald Dodge, another "home town" product, was also

a latent force for stability. Because of economic conditions and a loyal core of employees, Hollister was able to accomplish things that, on the surface, would seem prohibitive today. One of his policies was to keep several part-time employees from the ranks of the student body at the state university. This number varied from time to time but during the regular sessions four students constituted the part-time staff. Well paid, considering their part-time status and the state of the economy, student employees worked as few of their fellow students would have done. They might, on any given night, be awakened to make one or two ambulance calls, help in the preparation room, go pick up a body, or get up at periodic intervals to make and serve coffee to guests at a wake in one of the parlors.

In addition to college students, Hollister ordinarily employed four other unlicensed full-time men. In this category, as in the student ranks, there was a fairly rapid turnover, but in the period just prior to the war some unusually capable persons filled these posts.

The Hollister concern began to have significant difficulties in the late 1930's. In the first place the Hagenbeck firm, deeply in trouble in the early years of the decade, had been stabilized under new and capable management and was once again a serious competitor. Secondly, the expansion of the Hollister system had come to a halt. A third factor, as yet unmentioned, was the waning personal influence of the owner.

The personal equation had been, according to the most astute observers on the scene, one of the vital factors in the progress and development of the institution. Some consider this factor second only to the general social and economic conditions of the time. There is no way to evaluate this aspect of the situation except in the light of considered opinions of others, and of the writer. That Hollister himself considered it vital, we know.

Descriptions of activity in the early days of the Hollister Funeral Home in Middleville indicate the role played by the injection of personality and related attributes into the structure of business operations. At first almost every funeral received the personal attention of the owner. Hollister himself did considerable embalming, and even more important did practically all of the personal contact work with families of the deceased. In this he excelled. A part of this early success is credited to Mrs. Hollister, said to be "a fine business partner," who attended families of clients as if they were her own. There is some indication that a parting of the ways with this competent business partner was the turning point in Hollister's career. A second factor was the increased abstention from active participation in the operation of the funeral home. The efforts of the owner were increasingly devoted to the development of the insurance department and the funeral home was left in the hands of what eventuated in a

series of managers. This appears to have been a mistake. No one of the managers seems to have had the ability or the interest in the promotion of the type of service that had originally characterized the establishment. Then, too, the managers were invariably from outside the ranks of the cadre. Some resentment was voiced at the "high powered" managers that were brought in from the outside. In retrospect, the employees of the period seem to have been in almost complete disagreement with the Hollister selections for this post. Significantly, none of the managers remained for any length of time.

During these years Hollister absented himself more and more from the business. On two occasions he took his family abroad, one of these being a trip around the world. Outwardly the business continued to prosper, with the number of funerals accruing to the establishment growing each year, but it would seem now that the concern was already existing somewhat on its reputation of earlier years. The personal service that had differentiated it from its competitors was no longer being evidenced, and at least one manager in the long line had been guilty, as Hollister himself later discovered, of overselling[1] funerals, something that had never been a practice before.

War and threats of war brought the first signs of

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[1]A funeral director who "oversells" a funeral does so by persuading a family to buy a more expensive service. When the cost of the merchandise exceeds the ability of the family to pay, then the funeral has been oversold.

disintegration in the form of the second schism that the system had experienced.

THE SECOND SCHISM: DEUTSCHER-BILLETS

World War II was three months in the offing when the second schism occurred in the Hollister system. As in the case of the Madison schism in 1935, it involved ranking personnel in the organization.

Herman Deutscher, a home-trained member of the group, had joined Hollister in 1924 in Western Grove, and from him had learned all that the former could teach him about the fundamentals of embalming. As one of the original cadre, Deutscher became one of the prime stabilizing factors in the organization when Hollister moved from the funeral home into a private residence. It is important in this connection to observe that while the turnover in managers, embalmers, and general purpose personnel was high, Deutscher remained, for all practical purposes unchanged by the vicissitudes of the times. He submitted to various administrations, and because of his residence in the funeral home continued to be the "night manager."

There were indications of impending change over a year before the schism, but they were not recognized. These hints, coming from Deutscher himself in casual conversation, seem to indicate that the move was neither simple nor sudden. On Sept-

ember 1, 1941, Deutscher severed a connection of almost twenty years by withdrawing from the Hollister organization to set up his own funeral home in Middleville. In the conversation previously mentioned, he had commented to the effect that "someday someone will come along that will make both Hollister and Hagenbeck look sick."

Withdrawing with Deutscher was George L. Billets, one of the managers in the insurance division. As an insurance-funeral director team they formed the Deutscher-Billets Funeral Home and established the business in a small residential property on Massachusetts Avenue, one of the main arteries leading from Middleville to Metropolitan City. The house, a former duplex apartment located in a lower-middle class section some one mile past the city limits, was remodeled and the insurance department located in the front half of a frame structure next door, the remainder of which served as an apartment for one of the married employees and a dormitory for ambulance drivers and attendants.

Since financial matters are beyond the scope of this type of investigation, there is no way of ascertaining the source of support for the Deutscher-Billets establishment, but two sources indicate that a private citizen and a casket company may have been involved financially in addition to the combined resources of the partners.

Original employees remember that the early months of operation were difficult. The Deutscher-Billets Funeral Home, however, served a lower-middle class clientele in increasing numbers from this location for almost seven years. On June 25, 1949, with a changed name,[2] a new financial partner,[3] and a staff of eleven employees, a new Colonial-type structure on Vista Drive in North Middleville was opened to the public.[4] By far the most spacious of Middleville's three mortuaries, it was an imposing contrast to the surrounding industrial-residential neighborhood. This structure burned in 1955, with an almost total loss of equipment and furnishings, but was rebuilt immediately with the same basic type structure.

The emphasis in the Deutscher-Billets organization was cast in terms of service to the North Middleville industrial area, which contains almost 26 per cent of the city's total population. In addition to this, the funeral home was the "resident establishment" for suburban areas on the outskirts of the city's northern boundary.[5]

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[2]Deutscher-Billets Mortuary.

[3]T. J. Donovan, a North Middleville merchant.

[4]Middleville Star and Journal, June 24, 1949.

[5]Information compiled from the Middleville Population Density Map, supplied by the Middleville Chamber of Commerce. Figures quoted are based on the 1957 population of the city.

Along with the Deutscher-Billets schism came personnel troubles that, according to Hollister's own analysis, was a part of the complex of difficulties that eventually prompted him to dispose of his interests in Middleville. Even before the Selective Service Act began to affect the manpower situation, the business was losing key personnel. Among the first to go was Wade Dohoney, a mild-mannered, hard working Irishman from a funeral home family in a nearby state. Dohoney, who had ambitions to go to embalming school, was working at Hollister's for the experience. As a youth of fourteen, he had worked in the preparation room with his brother, the owner of a funeral home, and at the time under consideration was a careful, capable, albeit unlicensed embalmer. Under the supervision of the four licensed men on the Hollister staff, Dohoney was as valuable as a licensed man and a better operator[6] than many. This staff member was lost, first to a large funeral home in Metropolitan City, and then to the United States Army where he served as a master sergeant in the infantry. No longer interested in a mortuary career, he is employed by a chemical company in another state.

Another loss at this juncture was Harold Barnett, an ex-varsity tumbler and track man from the University of Kansas.

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[6] "Operator" is standard terminology among members of the funeral business, who seldom use the word "embalmer" when conversing with other members of the business.

Barnett, like Dohoney, was a capable all-around performer with fine potential who eventually served as an Air Force Officer during the war, following which he returned to the University of Kansas, received a degree in engineering, and is at this writing employed by a large petroleum company.

Jimmy Broussard, younger and less vulnerable to selective service, lasted longer than most, but eventually fought the Japanese as a Marine fighter pilot in the South Pacific. In 1958 he is the sole proprietor of a small construction business in Middleville. Jimmy McBride also left Hollister's in 1941 to join the army, but his eventual fate is not known, nor could his whereabouts be ascertained. Walter Pinkston, another student worker of the pre-war era, served in the armed forces and returned to resume a career in public school teaching and administration. An interview with a brother in Middleville disclosed the fact that he was at that time (1956) pursuing doctoral studies at Columbia University. Eric Wheeler, who joined the Hollister staff in 1940 as a recent graduate of embalming school, took a new position with the Hagenbeck Funeral Home in 1941, and Gerald Dodge, who had been with the firm since June, 1934, left to accept a position with the Deutscher-Billets Funeral Home. Only one of the younger members of the Hollister staff remained by 1942.

The most difficult problem faced during the war years was the lack of adequate personnel, followed closely by the

economic distresses occasioned by the rationing of gasoline and tires for the rolling stock. In the face of shortages of men and materials, the Hollister system, dependent as it was upon both for the operation of a complex organization, began to disintegrate. One by one it became necessary to liquidate the branch funeral homes. In two instances it was possible to allow managers to buy the homes that they were managing at the time. By 1943 only the Middleville home office remained in operation.

HOLLISTER: THE FAILURE OF RETRENCHMENT

With the vagaries of war forcing drastic curtailment of the funeral business, Hollister turned his attention to the home office, and in the latter months of 1943 negotiations were completed for the purchase of property on Capitol Avenue two blocks east of the Hagenbeck Funeral Home. The real estate, consisting of a substantial residence fronted by a large oak-shaded lawn, was purchased, remodeled, and opened for public inspection on April 8, 1944.[7] Advertising copy emphasised the beauty and charm of the new home and again, as in 1931, the lady assistant was emphasised.[8] The full page announcement

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[7]See Appendix A.

[8]On April 26, 1944 a regular news item, "Hollister's New Funeral Home Has Lady Funeral Director," further emphasised this point. Middleville Star and Journal, April 26, 1944.

was much like the one that featured the opening of the funeral home on Milwaukee Avenue in 1931. The full page announcement was followed a few days later by a regular news item which described the new funeral home as one of the most elaborate in the state. More important, the item indicated that Hollister had returned to active management of the funeral home.[9]

The new era, begun with difficulties in terms of personnel and equipment, had resolved itself in the direction of an elaboration of the home office in Middleville. This was in effect a retreating action from the expansion policies of the 1930's. The new home apparently did not justify its cost in terms of increased business. In retrospect, Hollister sees this move as an error in judgment, reasoning, whether rightly or not, that many people believed that they would be paying for the new funeral home through the increased price of funerals. That prices were increased, Hollister flatly denies, and at the same time is inclined to believe that some of his competitors helped the public to believe the worst.

Discouraged by personnel difficulties, wartime restrictions on materials and equipment, Hollister agreed to sell his Middleville interests in April, 1945. Competitive to the last, the business was sold only on the condition that

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[9]Middleville Star and Journal, April 19, 1944.

all members of the purchasing group be known to him, a provision designed to forestall the purchase of the business by Hagenbeck interests. On April 20, 1945 a group of Middleville business men headed by Max Rogers, former manager of the Hagenbeck Funeral Home, concluded negotiations for the transfer of the property. The selling price was $100,000, considerably less than Hollister had been offered for the establishment a few years previous.[10]

MAX ROGERS: THE NEW PROFESSIONAL

The post war years have seen considerable stability in the funeral business in Middleville. Undoubtedly one of the primary forces in this stabilization has been the influence of Hollister's successor on Capitol Avenue, Max Rogers. An Iowa farm boy who came to Middleville in 1932 to manage the Hagenbeck Funeral Home, Rogers is unique among Middleville funeral directors for a variety of reasons. Perhaps the most significant differentiation is his concept of the "calling" to the profession. No other Middleville funeral director seems to have this feeling about the business, and the philosophy merits exploration.

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[10]As a postscript to the Hollister story it should be mentioned that three successive business failures followed the successful operation of the funeral home in Middleville. A funeral home was purchased in a southeastern state, only to be sold at a loss after about a year "due to bad judgment." Two other business ventures, drug stores in a large midwestern city, failed to yield returns.

As a young man with a business college education working in a Georgia city in 1920, the answering of a newspaper advertisement provided a first contact with the funeral business. Yielding to a subconscious urge to "look into" a job which was described in a telephone conversation (in the form of a warning) as "a job in a funeral home," the position was accepted and became the starting point of a career.[11] It is somewhat difficult to establish this experience as being comparative with concepts of the "calling" in other professions, such as the ministry or priesthood, yet it is cast in these terms.

In the playing of a role designated here as the "new professional,"[12] Rogers more nearly personifies the ideal type of funeral director on the basis of attributes collated by the writer from an analysis of trade journal articles and editorials. Possessing such attributes as: (1) a pleasing personality, (2) an undeniable penchant for civic participation, and (3) a disposition to view the funeral business in the larger, more inclusive sense, the appellation seems merited. When personality type, background, and attitudes are considered, this Middleville mortician typifies the middle class approach to life. In Hollingshead's classificatory scheme a class II

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[11]This career in the funeral business, with one brief exception, a brief period in institutional administration, has been continuous since 1920.

[12]The term "new professional" is used here as a descriptive term and does not imply professional status for the mortician.

designation would be accurate.[13] Other concepts of the class structure would call for an upper-middle class rating.[14]

A successful transposition into the present context of the working realities of a somewhat strenuous early life is suggested when current activities and early philosophies are compared. Pleasantly genial in a reserved manner that suggests "impatient efficiency," Middleville's "new professional" seems the embodiment of the striving, middle class entrepreneur. Sensitive to the needs of the business, the obligations of citizenship seem equally demanding. In 1953 The Ledger, Middleville's civic affairs publication, described the contributions of this citizen to the life of the city in terms of the willingness to accept responsibility, pointing out the acceptance of chairmanships on civic committees and other important roles in community life. In taking "A Bow to Max Rogers," The Ledger noted that over a period of years he had worked on the Chamber of Commerce "builder's campaign," had been chairman of the area finance campaign for one of the Boy Scout councils for three years, and had taken over

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[13]August B. Hollingshead, "Selected Characteristics of Classes in a Middle-Western Community," American Sociological Review, XII (August, 1947), 385-395.

[14]Joseph A. Kahl, The American Class Structure (New York: Rinehart & Company, Inc., 1957), pp. 193-202.

the solicitation chairmanship for the Community Chest in the crucial year of 1947. The article point out that Mr. Rogers had been chairman of the advisory board of the Salvation Army, a member of the State Board of Education for fifteen years, and vice-chairman of the official board of one of the city's leading Protestant churches. Also mentioned was the fact that he was past president of the Downtown Lion's Club, president of Reliable Insurance Company, secretary of Commerce Life and Health Insurance Company, and a member of the Board of Governors of the National Funeral Director's Association.[15]

The "new professional" among Middleville's morticians expresses the views of the funeral business in the larger sense. Whether this is a result of participation in the national organizations of funeral directors, or whether national association participation came as the outgrowth of broader concepts of the funeral business is difficult to say. It is obvious that prestige, dignity, and an overall elevation of the funeral business along professional lines are firmly ensconced in the aims and ideals of this Middleville mortician.

Participation in the National Funeral Director's association is especially important in this connection since this organization reflects attitudes that closely compare with those

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[15]Feature article in the Middleville Ledger, April 25, 1953, pp. 8-12.

which trade journal editors hold constantly before funeral directors. Participation in the national organization, and especially the holding of an office in that group, is seen by this funeral director as being a contribution to the geographical area, since this is the first time that a person from the Middleville region has held such an office.

A sensitivity to "radicals" also marks the attitude of Middleville's contribution to national mortuary organizations. This vague concept, which seems not at all clear in the mind of the possessor, has been reflected by trade journals on the national level as a defense mechanism in countering measures designed to combat unfavorable publicity springing from the criticisms of liberal theologians and an occasional expose.

Of all of Middleville's morticians, Max Rogers seems most aware of the changes that have taken place in recent years in the city's funeral homes. He notes customs that have changed or are in the process of changing, and attributes some of them to the influx of people from the North and the East who have settled in Middleville to work in its industrial plants. The "wake," for example, seems to be gradually disappearing as a mortuary custom in Middleville, and some credit for this change is given to the incoming population from other regions.

Middleville's morticians seem to have a great deal of

respect for Max Rogers, despite the fact that he is in many respects set apart from the group. Some concern has been expressed over the failure of the establishment to do the volume of business that was expected to accrue quite naturally when control of the organization passed into the hands of the prominent citizen. As might be expected, some attribute this to "too much outside activity." One Middleville mortician put it this way: "A little of that is alright, you know, but a person ought to take a little better care of things at home." Others have more specific, if less empirically verifiable reasons, such as "He's too far ahead of the people." When pressed for an interpretation, this idea was expressed in a less complimentary way.

There is some doubt, then, about the progress of Middleville's "new professional." In volume of business he is reported on two different fronts as lagging somewhat behind his two competitors. This feeling is not universal, however. One Middleville mortician is certain that Rogers is "getting his share." As in other cases reported, there are expressions of petty opinions, some of them in all probability buttressed by gossip and/or jealousy. One conclusion would seem worthy of consideration. It is just possible that Middleville is not yet sufficiently prepared for this type of funeral direction with its emphasis upon customs, patterns, and attitudes that stem from higher associational levels.

SCHISMS WITHIN SCHISMS: BILLETS AND WHEELER

Another significant change occurred in Middleville's mortuary structure in 1957 when Eric Wheeler, an embalmer and funeral director for the Hagenbeck Funeral Home, left that organization and purchased the interest of George Billets in the Deutscher-Billets Mortuary. Wheeler, who had worked as an embalmer under Deutscher in the Hollister system in 1940 before joining Hagenbeck in 1941, brought with him another former employee of both the Hollister and Hagenbeck organizations, his wife, a bookkeeper.

This new combination kept intact the Hollister type of organization. Although a Hagenbeck employee for some eighteen years, complacent traditionalism, the Hagenbeck pattern, was never agreeable to Wheeler. This combination provides Middleville with its only agressive funeral home. Both Deutscher and Wheeler emphasize service and quality with little or no hint of altruistic or even pseudo-altruistic motivation. This attitude, unprofessional in its nature, reflects more the attitude of the businessman who depends upon the quality of goods and the reliability of the service rather than personal contact and promotion to establish and maintain the reputation of the concern. Not unlike their tutor from the days of Middleville's mortuary revolution, courtesy, promptness, and efficiency is expected of employees, and careful attention to detail

is an unwritten law. Little overt concern is shown for the socio-psychological and psychiatric aspects of funeral direction, with its attendant focus upon the counseling aspects of the relationship between the director and the bereaved family. Neither Deutscher nor Wheeler fits the pattern that national organizations seem to espouse.

George Billets, the remaining figure in the triangular-patterned schism, immediately established a small funeral home in Centertown, some fifteen miles from Middleville. There are indications that the Billets Funeral Home will be a family affair, and this is one of the reasons offered for the break with Deutscher. Two sons, both reared in the atmosphere of the funeral home, are actively participating in the operation of the business. Already this "son of the revolution" is following in the footsteps of Hollister; a new branch of the Billets Funeral Home has been established in Spanish Bend, a small town some eighteen miles from Centertown. At the present time it is little more than a residence to serve as a base of operations.

The Deutscher-Wheeler trend toward expansion will be evidenced in the near future. On or about August 1, 1958, the first branch funeral home for this concern will be established near Centertown. The new building, especially designed for the purpose, will be in effect a sub-station for the Middleville

home office. Only one employee and an ambulance will be maintained at the new branch.

SUMMARY

Middleville funeral homes, for all practical purposes, entered into a new era with the onset of World War II. With the curtailment of expansion and increasing difficulties of wartime operation, Hollister was forced to liquidate all of the branch funeral homes in the system and concentrate upon the operation of the home office. Another schism in the system developed just prior to World War II when Herman Deutscher and George Billets withdrew to form the Deutscher-Billets Funeral Home in September, 1941. In its fourteenth year of operation this organization suffered complete loss of a new funeral home that had been erected in the industrial section of Middleville in 1949. In 1945 Hollister sold his interests to Max Rogers and several Middleville businessmen. Rogers, seen as the "new professional" on Middleville's mortuary scene, has brought stability and associational representation.

A third schism developed from George Billet's desire for a "family operation" and Eric Wheeler's interest in a partnership. Both of these units are now expanding in the Hollister tradition.

CHAPTER VI

CHANGE AND ANALYSIS

The present structure of the funeral business in Middleville is the outgrowth of several forces. Some of these are comparatively well defined, while others have been all but lost in the shuffle. Some of them represent local manifestations of larger movements, while others are recognized as almost solely the results of the interplay of local factors. No attempt is made to pinpoint all of these forces that have shaped the destiny of the institution, rather, the major forces have been highlighted and assigned to appropriate spheres in terms of influence. No order of importance is designated except for a considered opinion based upon experience and study.

THE CENTRALITY OF EMBALMING

Considered from the mechanistic point of view, the process of embalming is of little or no consequence, but its utilization and acceptance are of considerable importance. The thesis that is here maintained is that the funeral business as we know it is almost totally dependent upon this one major technological development. Almost all of Middleville's funeral directors consider embalming the most significant change that has taken place in the history of the funeral business. As

long-time practitioners of the science, most of them remember when it was not widely accepted, and it would appear that acceptance of the process, and not embalming itself, has been the central feature of this aspect of change. None of Middleville's morticians indicate, however, a real understanding of some of the deeper, more pervasive complications that seem to be involved. Two things seem generally understood: (1) the process preserves the body so that it can be held for services at the convenience of the survivor, and (2) a more lifelike body is assured. Both of these factors facilitate the maintenance of sentiment upon which the funeral business is largely based. A third factor, sanitation, is involved and in any extended conversation is almost certain to be mentioned. Originally one of the primary reasons for embalming, the sanitation factor seems less important than it appears to have been some fifty years ago. The sanitary aspect of embalming seems to have been pushed back into the subconscious by the increasing importance of creating a more "natural" appearance and the necessity of adequately delaying the putrefactive processes. When this aspect is mentioned, the distinct impression is given that this is something that has been remembered from the funeral director's examination, or from a course in sanitary science in embalming school. To the funeral director with a local orientation the principal aim seems to be that of pleasing the public by presenting a body that resembles as closely as possible the real life appearance of the deceased. To the

professionally-oriented funeral director a "natural" body also represents the fulfillment of an obligation to the funeral business as a whole, that of the maintenance of an abstract body of sentiment through the use of embalming, dermasurgery, and cosmetology. On this level sentiment is recognized as being the raison d'etre of the funeral business.

Possession-control

None of the funeral directors in Middleville seems fully cognizant of the far-reaching implications of embalming beyond the three factors mentioned above. Possession-control, considered here as a fourth factor, may be traced back historically to the pre-embalming era, and even more significantly, to the period when embalming was known but accepted only with reservations. The undertaker, traditionally a merchandiser of funeral furniture and a renter of hearses, had little or no control over the processes attendant upon death, burial, and ceremonial ritual. The perfection of embalming provided the undertaker with both a reason and an opportunity to bring the body to the funeral parlors. The funeral director's main task, as recognized by all of the Middleville funeral directors, was to "educate" the public to embalming, and more specifically to embalming in the funeral home, where facilities were more than merely adequate. Early embalming was done in the home of the deceased with portable equipment, and it was at the insistence of the undertaker that bodies be brought to the

funeral home for preparation. It must be granted that for the sake of convenience to both the embalmer and the family, the preparation of the body at the funeral home is preferable. Here the technician has facilities that on the whole are far superior to portable embalming equipment. The morgue table can be adjusted hydraulically to meet the needs of the embalmer, and pressure machines are generally available. A far more elaborate set of instruments can be provided in the funeral home preparation room, and there is no waste disposal problem. For the family there are also certain obvious advantages. Unnecessary confusion is avoided by the removal of the body, and the family is given an opportunity to gather composure and regroup its forces. All of these things must be granted, and yet it must at the same time be asserted that the possession of the body provides the funeral director with a unique kind of control, a control vested in subtlety that exists but seems at times to defy description.

In the first place the possession-control factor insures a shift in the locus of operations. In this new location there is a possibility that perspectives may be altered. No censure of the funeral director is implied in this assertion, but merely a statement of fact that is at least partially due to possession-control. For the funeral director this shift in the scene of operations means that he can ostensibly do better embalming and thus enhance the value of his services. But even more

important is the intangible feeling that "things are under control." The funeral director is disadvantaged without this control and a state of calculated uneasiness exists until it is established. This is understandable from another viewpoint as well. The future of the business depends upon the quality of service that is given, and a part of the service rendered consists in the proper display of the "product." When the body can be displayed in the funeral parlors under the most favorable conditions that can be mustered, the best possible future of the business is being insured. From the ethical viewpoint he cannot give the kind of service that is presumed wanted unless use is permitted of the best facilities available. The ethical rationale which undergirds this conscious or unconscious seeking of control seems to be a generally accepted popular mandate to make the ordeal of death less painful.

Possession-control is essential for effective merchandising. In the period of time before embalming was a generally accepted practice, it was not uncommon for a funeral director to receive a call to bring a casket in a certain price range to a home. In a transaction of this type there was no opportunity to show the family a different type of casket, a better quality of merchandise, or additional funeral goods. Once again there can be arguments on the point of service. Is the funeral director doing his best for the family if they cannot see what he has to offer? Merchandising became an important

facet of the funeral business in the early years of the depression. Funeral directors were urged to "merchandise upward" and avoid the temptation to seek volume at little or no profit just to keep a competitor from getting the business.[1] Morticians were chastised because no effort had been made to apply the knowledge that merchants had been accumulating for years,[2] and were told that profits were made at the time of the sale, and not when the goods were bought.[3] Through the mechanism of possession-control the customer is brought to the "market" where a great variety of funeral furniture is made available for selection. Only under such circumstances does the funeral director have any significant opportunity to do effective merchandising.

With the possible exception of Herman Deutscher, and to a lesser extent his partner Eric Wheeler, consciousness of possession-control in any form on the part of Middleville's morticians seems remote. Continued emphasis on the service motive and the general acceptance of embalming has had the effect of conceding this control to the funeral director.

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[1]Editorial: "Profitable Salesmanship," Southern Funeral Director, XXV (August, 1931), 30.

[2]R. A. Wilmot, "Building Good Will by Proper Merchandising," Southern Funeral Director, XXV (July, 1931), 32.

[3]D. M. Strickland, "Salesmanship as Applied to Funeral Directing," Southern Funeral Director, XXV (September, 1931), 34.

The lateral limits of possession-control seem, in terms of this analysis, virtually unbounded. Embalming, whatever and however important its other features may be, is at its utilitarian best as a technological development eventuating in the control of the dead human body. In noting the "erosion" in the prestige of the embalmer, Habenstein indicates that funeral direction does not gain its essential character from the embalming function, but from the dramatic presentation of the funeral ceremony.[4] Embalming, nevertheless, continues to provide the basis for control that has long since been taken for granted.

INDUSTRIAL INSURANCE

Industrial insurance, which came into prominence in Middleville in 1933, has played a significant role in the development of its mortuaries. Developed out of the burial association movement as a protection for the policyholder, these legal reserve companies are under the supervision of the state insurance commission. It is difficult to speculate concerning the influence that industrial insurance has had upon Middleville's mortuaries, but any competent analysis, it would seem, must consider at least three effects that this

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[4]Robert W. Habenstein, "The American Funeral Director: A Study in the Sociology of Work" (unpublished Doctoral dissertation, Columbia University, New York, 1954), pp. 334-335.

factor has had: (1) a new stability in depth in the funeral business, (2) a lateral extension of the concept of service, and (3) an intensification of the processes of change. Before examining these factors it is necessary to inquire into the nature of industrial insurance.

Industrial life insurance originated in Great Britain in the 19th Century, and John F. Dryden, often called the "father of industrial insurance in America," received many of his impressions about insurance while on a visit to that country.[5] By definition, industrial insurance is a form of security which makes provision for burial expense and final illnesses of family members.[6]

It is interesting to note that industrial insurance was preceeded historically by the Friendly Societies, and these were in turn antedated by burial societies in China.[7] These societies came about as the result of a willingness on the part of mankind to give up precious things for the benefit of their departed. This tendency, modified by religious practices, degenerated into various forms of ostentation and pretense, and eventually led to the impoverishment of the survivors. The result of this situation led to appeals for

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[5]Edward A. Woods, The Sociology of Life Insurance (New York: D. Appleton & Company, 1928), p. 101.

[6]Ibid., p. 103.

[7]E. W. Brabrook, Provident Societies and Industrial Welfare (London: Blackie and Son, Ltd., 1898), pp. 43-44.

help from neighbors, and from this recurrent situation burial societies were formed in which casual help was eventually translated into a financial levy on each of the members.[8]

The first industrial insurance in the United States was issued by the Prudential Insurance Company of America on November 10, 1875.[9] Four years later the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company and the John Hancock Mutual Life Insurance Company began the sale of industrial life insurance along with ordinary life.[10]

Industrial insurance is based in the main upon a psychological condition that seems to beset the economically depressed classes. No matter how poverty stricken these people have been, the avoidance of a pauper burial seems to be a prime aim.[11] It seems inescapable that industrial insurance is one of the few ways in which economically marginal people can escape the haunting fears of the final demise. To have a fine funeral is the last wish of many people in the lower class.

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[8] Ibid., p. 43.

[9] Malvin E. Davis, Industrial Life Insurance in the United States (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., Inc., 1944), p. 6.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Woods, op. cit., p. 104.

Woods explains that industrial insurance has certain very definite advantages for the class of people for whom it was designed. It helps promote habits of thrift, relieves the worker's mind of a fear of the pauper's grave, is applicable to almost all members of the wage earner's family, and is ordinarily available to people who could not procure other insurance without difficulty, if at all. Finally, the claim is made that industrial life insurance has served as a great educator for the masses, teaching them the purposes, functions, and importance of life insurance coverage.[12] There are disadvantages to industrial insurance, both to the policyholder and the company. In the first place the costs are too high, and the rates must of necessity be high. The cost is mainly involved in high overhead. The industrial insurance premium is ordinarily collected by an agent on a weekly or monthly basis, and the agent must get his percentage. Then, too, the rates must be high because of the high risks of this type of insurance and the high lapse rate.[13]

With all of its disadvantages, and in spite of the obvious weaknesses in the advantages suggested by Woods, industrial insurance has tactical and strategic value for the funeral director. Perhaps the only distinctly sound advantages

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[12]Woods, op. cit., p. 111.

[13]Ibid., p. 106.

suggested by Woods are those which recognize freedom from worry about burial costs, and the ability to procure this type of insurance when ordinary life insurance would be unobtainable except at rates which would be beyond reason for this class of person. The factor concerning coverage for the entire family has merit, but the other factors are seriously open to question. It is doubtful that any constructive habit of thrift is promoted by the regular payment of industrial insurance premiums. It is also doubtful that industrial insurance is the great "educator" that is is claimed to be.

The funeral business, however, finds tactical use for the industrial insurance business. There are four dimensions of tactical usage: (1) on the local level the industrial insurance has the advantage of securing advance clientele, (2) it provides a tactical "wedge" for the incoming competitor, especially if it is initiated by the challenger, (3) it becomes a ready vehicle for the expansion of the funeral home, and (4) it can provide a financial bulwark against "lean days" in the funeral business.

When considering the effects that have come from the introduction of industrial insurance into the funeral business in Middleville, a new stability in depth must be considered of first rank importance. This effect, which has long-term strategic consequences, has meant that Middleville funeral homes, in contradistinction to mortuary establishments in other

sections of the country, are virtually assured of an adequate income from funerals. The funeral home with an insurance business has a monopoly, the extent of which is determined by the number of policies in force at a given time. Consequently, the possession of an insurance company with sixty-thousand policies in force would be tantamount to having the only funeral home in a city with that population, and this figure does not include the family, friends, and neighbors of the policyholder that might be influenced. One Middleville funeral director estimates that he will receive approximately eight funerals per year from each one thousand policies in force.

In addition to assurance of an income in terms of being certain of receiving a minimum number of funerals, further protection is offered from bad debts. Ordinarily the insurance policy will cover the overhead expenses involved, hence losses are reduced to a minimum on funerals that are covered by industrial insurance.

Stability in depth is also reflected in the quality of service that can be offered when there is an assurance of a potential income. Duncan Hollister, who brought industrial insurance to Middleville in 1933, has emphasised this aspect of the industrial insurance program. Commenting upon the expense of operating complex establishments of the type found in Middleville, he feels that

It would have been impossible to have fleets of cars

> and a large number of employees with a $75,000 establishment unless he could be sure of the potential income caused by the death of policyholders or their families and friends that did not carry insurance.[14]

Industrial insurance, then, has given Middleville's funeral homes a new stability in depth. This has meant greater security for the funeral director, with less temptation to engage in overselling or other equally noxious practices, although it must be admitted that there is the possibility that insurance security could be an open invitation to push sales on the theory that it is worth the risk since the basic overhead is assured. As a group, Middleville's morticians seem heartily in favor of industrial insurance. For one thing, it has all but eliminated the possibility of new funeral homes being established in Middleville.

Another significant effect of the industrial insurance program in Middleville's mortuary revolution has been that of a lateral extension of the concept of service. Two things are to be recognized here. First, by giving the lower socio-economic groups burial security at low premium rates, the entire level of the funeral service concept has been lifted. A family covered by an industrial insurance policy could, under the terms of the policy, afford more than the cheapest funeral available. With this better grade of funeral furniture came a better grade of

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[14]Personal correspondence from Mr. Duncan Hollister, April 18, 1958.

service, again due in part to the industrial insurance program. This is not to assert that there is virtue in more expensive funeral furniture, but is merely to state the facts in the case. Briefly put, the industrial insurance program carried services to the people. In many ways it "urbanized" rural people by offering the same quality of service and merchandise available to the urban dweller. Moreover, free ambulance service, when it was available, undoubtedly had the effect of acquainting the public with some of the broader aspects of the funeral business. What is more, the fact that it was offered as an inducement in the selling of industrial insurance policies helped to spread the influence of the insurance by increasing the sales value of the policy and thus implementing sales.

It is undeniable that industrial insurance might have eventually made its way into the Middleville area, and with somewhat the same effects that it has been shown to have had on the funeral business. It is doubtful, however, if the extent of the changes would have been as great outside the context of a depression economy, a monopolistic funeral business, and an agressive advocate of change. With industrial insurance being used as a tactical "wedge" in the interests of gaining a foothold in a given area, funeral directors have had to alter concepts of funeral service operation in order to remain in competition. Industrial insurance, under these conditions, has had the effect of intensifying the struggle for survival.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE CHAIN SYSTEM

The first appearance of chain funeral homes in the South was noted by the editor of Embalmer's Monthly in April, 1929.[15] The chain system, viewed by independent funeral directors as a serious threat to the small establishment, had made its appearance in the North and had caused considerable concern. This type of organization ordinarily consists of a central establishment in a large city and several branch funeral homes in nearby cities or suburban areas.

In all probability the conception of the chain system in the funeral business as an expression of the innate expansive tendencies of the corporate structure has been overdrawn. While some of the aspects of the "mass mortuary"[16] as conceived by Habenstein undoubtedly apply in the case of chain systems, the Hollister Funeral Home chain system bore little resemblance to the classification. Two factors seem significant in the development of the Hollister chain system of funeral homes in the Middleville area: (1) the personal desires of the owner for a "larger operation," and (2) the peculiar nature of the industrial insurance business as utilized by the Hollister

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[15]Editorial: Embalmer's Monthly, XLII (April, 1929), 46.

[16]Habenstein, op. cit., Chap. IX.

system. In the first connection, Hollister admittedly came to Middleville with "a larger operation" in mind. A long-time acquaintance and former employee has noted that to Hollister "expansion was a hobby." Some support for this thesis may be indicated in the dissatisfaction with wartime restrictions and forced liquidation of the branch funeral homes. With regard to the second factor, the peculiar nature of the industrial insurance business in the Hollister system, the following may be offered in explanation. In ordinary insurance the payment of cash claims is sufficient, but in industrial insurance where the beneficiary receives services, the servicing agency is forced to provide acceptable payment in this form or face the alternative of not being able to sell its insurance. In the Hollister case ambulance service, attached to industrial insurance policies, presented a difficult problem in an expanding system. Unless more or less readily available, ambulance service is worthless, since the ready availability of facilities is predicated upon the distance from the servicing agency to the consumer. Therefore, the successful promotion of industrial insurance outside the Middleville area made it imperative to provide certain locations with facilities for handling both ambulance and death claims. Under these conditions the Hollister branch funeral homes were organized.

Within the span of slightly less than ten years, thirteen of these branch funeral homes were established, most of them

within a radius of fifty miles. These branches, with one or two exceptions, were little more than residential properties converted into funeral homes. Frequently almost no modifications in the basic structure were made. For most of the branches the funeral home served as an insurance headquarters for the immediate area, a place where a few caskets could be kept, from which an ambulance could be operated, and from which a service could be conducted. In the larger branches such as Charlesville complete facilities were provided for independent operation and licensed personnel were assigned. Most of the Hollister branches, however, were less adequate than the one mentioned above.

A paramount feature of this system was centralized control. The home office, with a large staff of embalmers and funeral directors, served as the nucleus of the operation with the branches as self supporting as possible. The status of all of the branches varied from time to time because of the difficulty in keeping embalmers, and those who remained in the system for any length of time were subject to service all over the system. The system had obvious advantages from the administrative point of view. Not only were managers shifted around the system as vacancies arose, but they were also asked to help nearby branches when the occasion presented itself, and they in return could expect help from another branch or from the home office. In the Hollister system the nature of the

funeral business was utilized to its fullest. In the funeral business activity is sporadic. Institutional activity varies according to the frequency of death calls, and these may come spaced at convenient intervals or the opposite condition may obtain. With centralized control such as existed in the Hollister system, it was possible to move personnel and equipment from one part of the system to another to meet almost any type of emergency. In 1941 Hollister was able to conduct one of the largest funerals in the history of Middleville by the simple expedient of calling in hearses from two of the branch funeral homes. The occasion was the simultaneous funerals of five members of a single family that had been killed in an automobile accident.

Furnishing service limousines and extra hearses to outlying branch funeral homes for services was a common practice for the home office, as well as utilizing the home office straight ambulances when service committments retained the local branch combination hearse and ambulance.

Some obvious difficulties accrued to this system, however. Since successful funeral practice is largely constructed around confidence and stability, the frequent movement of branch managers, while undoubtedly aiding the system as a whole, hindered the development of the local branches. Seldom were Hollister branch managers able to identify themselves with the communities in which they worked. An exception to this

was J. T. Holland, manager of the Hollister Funeral Home at Old River, who established himself firmly in the community and at this writing operates his own business, purchased from Hollister when the latter was in the process of liquidating his interests.

Another difficulty with the operation of branch funeral homes was the inability of the system to retain managers for any reasonable length of time. This has been a major problem for the funeral business as a whole, and branch operation tends to magnify this defect. Wade Dohoney, a former assistant in one of the Hollister branches, flatly attributes the downfall of the system to personnel deficiency. It is asserted that at times the employees in Hollister branches were neither capable nor interested in promoting the welfare of the organization. Being sent to one of the branch funeral homes from the central office was, for some employees, tantamount to "Siberian exile." Activity in the branch funeral homes seems to have been characterized by extremes; long periods of inactivity and contrariwise periods of overwork. Another problem connected with branch operation was the extreme diversity of the work task, ranging from common labor (the setting up of the funeral tent and lowering device) to funeral direction, with all manner of intermediary tasks.

One other general problem seems to have been inherent in the operation of the chain system of funeral homes. With

the Hollister concentration on expansion, the home office and Middleville area seem to have been neglected. Seen in time perspective, the policy of expansionism is understood as having contributed to the restoration to power of the Hagenbeck Funeral Home. Deliberate concentration in the Middleville area by Hagenbeck insurance agents in the early years of the industrial insurance program in Middleville established the local dominance of the old traditional funeral home.

In addition to local concentration with regard to industrial insurance, the Hagenbeck firm concentrated on the rebuilding of lost prestige through marked improvement in physical facilities and rolling stock. Even though the new funeral home on Capitol Avenue was barely six years old, it was being extensively reconditioned in 1938, when structural glass brick was added for natural light to one of the parlors, a sun-room added to another parlor, and two small parlors were combined to form one large reposing room. In addition to this, the building was completely air conditioned.[17] In the previous year six new cars had been added to the fleet, including a new ambulance, a new service car, two seven-passenger limousines, and two funeral coaches.[18]

The results of the Hollister concentration on the chain

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[17]"News of the Industry Over the States," Southern Funeral Director, XXXIX (September, 1938), 36.

[18]"News of the Industry Over the States," Southern Funeral Director, XXXVI (May, 1937), 35.

system were not immediately apparent, and it remained for the restrictive conditions accompanying World War II to demonstrate some of its inherent weaknesses. Observers on the Middleville scene have speculated as to the possible outcome of the competitive struggle had Hollister concentrated on a single establishment in the city, and the general consensus has been that in all probability the Hagenbeck concern could not have survived the competition.

THE PROBLEM OF ADVERTISING

There are two aspects of the funeral business which make advertising a problem. First, the very nature of the business itself seems to suggest that the less we hear about death, the more pleasant life itself will be. To this premise must be added the sombre stereotype of the undertaker. This characterization, historically cast and difficult to erase, has been sustained in anecdotes, legends, and theatrical portrayals. In the second place, the efforts of the funeral director to achieve professional status through national associations has resulted in concern about the ethics of the "profession."

Because of the nature of the business itself and the tendency on the part of some of its members to regard themselves as professionals, advertising has presented a problem, and this problem has been intensified in situations where, as in Middle-

ville, monopoly conditions have existed. The funeral director who would become established in such a situation faces the problem of getting public attention, and sometimes relatively quickly, if he is to survive. This would be a delicate problem without ethical implications, because public opinion must at all times be considered. The funeral director is faced with the problem of having to advertise while at the same time pretending not to advertise. In meeting this dilemma he is confronted with the restrictions of professionalism, to which he presumably aspires, and the problems of merchandising as well. This dilemma has posed the problem of finding appropriate channels for advertising that could be fitted into the narrow requirements imposed by this dual set of restrictions.

The Personality Component

The personality component is an intrinsic part of the funeral director's advertising. D. W. Hollister, the man who revolutionized the funeral business in Middleville, has been known to place a monetary value upon his personality in terms of its worth to the establishment. The advertising value of this component is best understood in the sense that it is connected to the development of public confidence in the mortician as an individual. In expediting this facility to its fullest extent, the usual pattern of middle class "joining" and participation was employed by Hollister in his early years in Middleville. We are told that both Hollister and his wife

were "good mixers," and in defense of what may seem to be crass "using" of people and organizations, there is every indication that the same pattern would have been employed regardless of occupation. The customary fraternal orders were joined, and Mrs. Hollister was extraordinarily active in one of them. Two veterans organizations, both national in scope, received attention, as well as Middleville civic organizations. Successive residences were established, first in a modest house in a middle class neighborhood, and later in a somewhat more pretentious structure in one of the better residential sections of Middleville.[19] Generous and frequent entertainers, the Hollisters were hosts to some of the city's outstanding citizens. Civic enterprises frequently tapped this resource in recognition of an outstanding talent for organization and promotion, and one of Middleville's largest Protestant churches received his active support.

Once the business was established, owning quality automobiles became a regular feature of the Hollister pattern. After trying out several brands, Packards were retained as "the only car that would stay under him." In the interest of the business the two Packard limousines were owned and

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[19]In seventeen years in Middleville Hollister completed a residential "cycle," living in the funeral home in 1929 and in 1945, with residence types in the interim years.

operated in the name of the funeral home and were occasionally used by the company when a dual set of funeral cars was needed for a single afternoon. Most of the time, however, the two cars were available for the personal use of the Hollister family.

Indirect Advertising

The funeral director seldom advertises as other commercial concerns. Ordinarily business directory notices, simple and dignified sections in business and city directories, and conservative advertisements in telephone directories constitute the extent of direct advertising. Funeral director's associations have been virtually unanimous in the condemnation of commercial type advertising and aggressive funeral homes have been forced to engage in indirect advertising schemes.

One form of indirect advertising that seemed to justify the effort entailed in its operation was the "time service" plan. This idea was not new with Hollister. Stanley and White, morticians in Anniston, Alabama, had used it in 1928 and had found it to be "...most ethical and loaded with value in every direction."[20] The advertising value lay in the public use of the telephone number of the funeral home. No user of the scheme has doubted its efficacy as an advertising medium. Some of the

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[20]"Time Service Proves Ethical Advertisement," Casket and Sunnyside, LVIII (February, 1928), 11.

disadvantages were revealed in actual operation, however. In the first place the plan proved extremely wearing on employees. Experience revealed that the service was used most frequently during the changing of shifts at Middleville's industrial plants, hence "opening up the switchboard" in anticipation of time service calls became an onerous chore which meant some two and one-half hours of constant operation, during which time it was not uncommon to have all trunk lines in operation simultaneously. A new toggle-type switchboard was installed during the latter portion of the time service period, and the task was made somewhat less wearing, but it was never popular. Even more difficult was the duty performed by "sleeping on" the main line through the night. This thankless job, which could be counted upon to disturb the sleeper throughout the night, was held for many years by Herman Deutscher, the night manager who lived on the premises. Much to the relief of employees, the system was discontinued when the dial telephone system was installed and a local bank installed an automatic recording device that provided a time service feature.

Another advertising service scheme that tended to frustrate employees at the Hollister Funeral Home was the chair loaning plan. A stock of folding chairs, suitably identified with a metal nameplate, was made available for the use of organizations or individuals who needed them for parties, meetings, or other similar occasions. Tasks associated with

the delivery and return of folding chairs became a standard cause for complaint because quite often they came after duty hours.

A more direct form of advertising was the distribution of pasteboard fans, thousands of which were taken to rural areas and placed on church pews. Hollister was also the first in Middleville to utilize filler-type semi-permanent calendars. Employees of the establishment, especially in the first few years of operation, were sent into rural areas where heavy cardboard posters were nailed to trees. Other signs of a more permanent variety were made and painted by employees in the company garage.

In 1934 Hollister, an inveterate dabbler in ideas, narrowly missed a coup in the advertising field when the opportunity of becoming the owner of Middleville's first radio station presented itself, but was rejected. A radio program, consisting of a fifteen minute daily program of organ music broadcast direct from the funeral chapel, was eventually made a part of the Hollister advertising plan. This same chapel organ was used to present a series of Sunday afternoon concerts in November, 1934.

Perhaps the last promotional scheme for advertising purposes that was attempted by Hollister was the sponsorship in 1940 of an American Legion Junior Baseball team.

Mortuary Automotive Equipment and the Advertising Problem

In some phases, the funeral business in Middleville seems to have developed at a pace some fifteen to twenty years behind that of urbanized sections in other parts of the country. In parts of the North, for example, motorized equipment was being used by funeral homes in the early years of the century, although Habenstein and Lamers point out that New York City had horse-drawn funerals for some time after most of the country had adopted motorized equipment.[21] Even before the turn of the century trolley cars had been used for funeral transportation in most of the major cities.[22] Perhaps the first real funeral utilizing automobiles took place on April 1, 1909, when the F. F. Roberts Company of Chicago used a White Steamer hearse and six White Steamer limousines in a funeral that made the eleven mile, one hour run to Mt. Rose Cemetery in "...a perfectly noiseless procession."[23] It was a little later in this same period that James C. Cunningham and Son of Rochester, New York, advertised their first motor ambulance.[24]

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[21]Robert W. Habenstein and William M. Lamers, The History of American Funeral Directing (Milwaukee: Bulfin Printers, 1955), p. 368.

[22]Ibid., p. 371.

[23]"First Real Automobile Funeral," The Director, I (April, 1909), 10.

[24]James C. Cunningham and Son: advertisement, The Casket, XXXIV (July, 1909), cover.

The tone of advertising copy written about the first funeral cars driven by internal combustion engines indicates that even the manufacturers were skeptical about the new mode of transportation. The reluctance to make the change from horse-drawn equipment to motorized hearses is indicated in three ways: (1) the reappearance of the horse-drawn coach in advertising copy after the appearance of the first motorized models, (2) the feeling of some of the manufacturers that they were being pushed into this new endeavor, and (3) the effort on the part of some manufacturers to bridge the gap between the old and the new with intermediary types that would lessen the chance of non-acceptance. In the first instance it may be admitted that the companies may have simply wanted to rid themselves of a stock of horse-drawn hearses, but this seems improbable. A more likely answer to this reappearance of conventional styles is that the response to the innovation was not as great as had been anticipated. Some of the firms felt that they were being pushed in the direction of motorized equipment, or perhaps this was one manner of rationalizing in the face of a conservative response. At any rate, Crane and Breed, pioneers in the manufacturing of automobile hearses, claimed that the new means of transportation was coming, but that they were not pushing it. On the contrary, the company admitted that it was "...among the pushed."[25] There were also

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[25]Crane and Breed: advertisement, The Casket, XXXIV (August, 1909), inside front cover.

efforts to go part of the way with the new, yet cling to the traditional. James C. Cunningham and Son introduced a new model in 1909, indicating that they had built it along regular funeral car lines because they "...did not consider it advisable to make too radical a change from the horse-driven vehicle."[26]

These early cars were low powered, low speed vehicles, many of them chain driven. Undoubtedly mechanical failures were not uncommon, and while there is seldom mention of such difficulties, the appearance of a special department for such troubles in one of the trade journals seems indicative of the fact that the new mode of transportation was not entirely satisfactory.[27] Crane and Breed furnished a full set of tools with their hearses in 1909.[28]

Public opinion gave reason for thought where design was concerned, and speed was also an item to be considered. With the advent of motorized hearses, accusations of "rushing the dead to the cemetery" were heard,[29] and Crane and Breed, possibly aware of the existence of this feeling, hastened to say that

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[26] Ibid., cover.

[27] "Motor Service Department," The Casket, XLI (May, 1916), 71.

[28] Crane and Breed: advertisement, The Casket, XXXIV (July, 1909), inside front cover.

[29] Scudder Hull, What Becomes of Us? (Philadelphia: Dorrance & Company, Publishers, 1943), p. 17.

their hearses would go thirty miles an hour, "...faster by 15 miles than any hearse should go."[30] Apparently sales resistance to the new mode of transportation of the dead was greater than expected, because traditional styles prevailed well into the 1920's, with ornately carved hearse bodies representing the best that the various companies had to offer. The horse-drawn coach, however, was still being offered for sale by one company in a leading trade journal as late as 1915.[31]

In the late 1920's evidence of the automobile manufacturer's influence on hearse design became evident. The predominately funeral coach-oriented styles that had been in the main designed by producers of horse-drawn carriages began to fade away and the passenger car of the motor age began to dominate the style trend. Since the chassis tends to control style to a certain extent, body manufacturers were more or less forced to conform to certain body lines. The result has been that the lines of the basic automobile have determined the lines of the funeral coach, a factor that was not seriously considered when motor hearses were first introduced. The designers of hearse and ambulance bodies have had to take into consideration the basic chassis, whereas in the beginning there seemed to have

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[30]Crane and Breed: advertisement, The Casket, XXXIV (September, 1909), inside front cover.

[31]Advertisement: The Casket, XL (October, 1915), 32.

been very little blending of the two basic units, body and chassis. The Henney-Packard version of 1940 ambulance and hearse styles, for example, reflected the angular lines of the basic vehicle, and in the same year the Flxible-Buick body lines followed the gently curved contours of the basic car. The same thing could be said for Cadillac-Superior. Since the chassis is the same that is found in pleasure automobiles everywhere (with the exception of length) it would seem beyond question that modern hearse design is the product of the manufacturers of automobiles equally as much as it is of the body designers.

Almost from the beginning the hearse and other units of rolling stock, the ambulance, the flower car, the funeral service car, limousines, and other specialized vehicles peculiar to the trade, have been status-bearing devices. In the early days of this country, both the doctor and the undertaker were judged by the horses they drove,[32] and this tendency has persisted. There is some indication that funeral directors prefer the more expensive brands of rolling stock because they tend to have a low rate of depreciation.[33] This, however, would seem to be a minor factor when other facets are considered. Automobiles, whether personal or commercial, have become prestige-bearing units,

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[32]Scudder Hull, What Becomes of Us? (Philadelphia: Dorrance & Co., Publishers, 1943), p. 9.

[33]Habenstein and Lamers, op. cit., p. 383.

and any thoroughgoing examination of this aspect of the funeral business ultimately resolves itself into the problem of maintaining prestige in the light of increasing competition and in the face of the continued materialistic interpretation of our culture. Partly because of the nature of semi-professional ethics that prevent or discourage direct advertising, funeral equipment has become more and more an indirect advertising medium. A part of this type of advertising is to be found in the use of ambulances as well as prestige-type hearses. Because of the frequency with which ambulances are used in comparison to hearses, the funeral director has seen in them an opportunity to "advertise" without danger of offending.

While ambulances have disappeared from the garages of Middleville's two largest funeral homes, other funeral vehicles have moved to the top of the status pyramid. Buicks and Packards, used by Hollister and Hagenbeck before World War II, have been replaced by Cadillac units almost altogether. The very word "Cadillac" has become synonomous with high status and standards of excellence, and as one Middleville mortician has said, "It just adds something to a funeral." The Hagenbeck Funeral Home, in addition to Cadillac hearses, has air-conditioned Cadillac funeral service limousines to round out a matching fleet of funeral cars. Middleville's morticians continue to adhere to traditional black as the color for their funeral coaches, although Hagenbeck experimented with a "midnight blue" hearse in 1948.

THE AMBULANCE SERVICE CONTROVERSY

Very little has been published concerning one of the more important aspects of the funeral business in the South. Habenstein and Lamers do not discuss the problem in their book, and the problem appears to be a regional one. The writer knows of no other locality where the ambulance has been more important in terms of total influence on the modern structure of the funeral business than in Middleville. The city had ambulance service even in the days of horse-drawn coaches, but the invalid coach came into its own only when made a part of the industrial insurance program. Hollister's burial association, the first of its kind in the area, offered free ambulance service to certificate holders within a ten-mile radius of Middleville, and the policies issued by the Reliable Industrial Insurance Company often carried ambulance service clauses specifying ambulance service up to one hundred miles. The ambulance service feature was originally designed to counteract the influence of outside burial associations by providing a type of service that these competitors could not hope to match with the handicap of distance. Quite as a side issue, the ambulance service factor provided an advertising medium out of all proportion to original expectations. The fact that several ambulances were required to service industrial insurance policies numbering in the thousands, while an expensive operation, provided "advertisement on wheels" for Middleville's morticians.

At low rates, (three dollars for a city trip in 1933) non-policyholders availed themselves of the service and contacts with future clientele were made.

In recent years, however, funeral directors have sought to rid themselves of the ambulance service burden. The reasons for this should be sought, and two factors seem worthy of note in this connection: (1) the lack of a sound primary basis for the original connection between the funeral home and the ambulance, and (2) a diminishing functional utility. In the first instance the likeness in appearance and function of the two cars, the hearse and the ambulance, was undoubtedly a factor in the beginning. In this connection it is interesting to note that a great many people today label both vehicles "ambulances" without apparent differentiation. One possible explanation for this is the fact that a great many (perhaps most) small town funeral directors can afford only one funeral car, and it must be a "combination" coach that can, with minor adjustments, be converted from a funeral coach into an ambulance.[34] In the second place the funeral director, proceeding from the fringes of cultural respectability toward an acceptable status, could

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[34]These minor adjustments vary from coach to coach, but ordinarily an ambulance can be changed into a funeral coach by the removal of the cot and the floor carpet and the addition of flower racks. The carpet in this case covers casket rollers that have been built into the floor of the car.

not afford to ignore any opportunity to increase his functional utility to the community. The acceptance of this responsibility of maintaining and operating an ambulance service, then, came more or less as a result of the consonance of the likeness of his equipment to the needed vehicle, and the need for more meaningful contact with the community on the part of the funeral director. Also to be considered here is the failure of responsible institutions to institute ambulance service. Hospitals, to whom the function would seem logically to belong, have been slow to assume the responsibility. Communities, while developing fire departments and other such agencies, have not seen fit to add ambulance service in many cases. These deficiencies were especially prevalent in the South, and it was in this region that ambulance service was so often left to the funeral director.

Through the years a rationale was developed which amply justified the possession of the service by the funeral director. At the present time, however, Middleville's morticians, with one exception, have succeeded in transfering this service to an organization formed for that purpose, Ambulance Service Company. This establishment has received financial undergirding from two Middleville funeral directors, and has in return undertaken to fulfill all of the ambulance service responsibilities of the two firms.

Ambulance service has been abandoned by these Middleville

funeral directors, it would seem, for three fundamental reasons. In the first place Middleville ambulance service has not followed the "normal" development pattern in evidence in other parts of the South. Hollister's free ambulance service with industrial insurance, not to mention his "cut rate" service in the very beginning, virtually forced other companies to compete in the same manner. Funeral homes were forced to maintain several straight ambulances in order to give adequate service, and to employ several additional staff members to operate the ambulances on a twenty-four hour basis. Dormitory space for ambulance crews was another added expense.

A second factor involved dissatisfaction on the part of licensed personnel, when, as was frequently the case, they were pressed into service on the ambulances. With the shortage of licensed embalmers constituting a near crisis in some areas, employee frinction had to be kept at a minimum.

In the third place it is noted that ambulance service benefits were abused, and people became "spoiled" along these lines. Persons who were not ambulatory patients were found abusing their privileges by using ambulance service for trips to their physician. These abuses became more and more frequent as the volume of industrial insurance increased. Steps were taken to stop some of the abuses, but were largely ineffectual. When drastic steps were taken in this direction, insurance agents complained of lapse rate increases.

Finally, the ambulance is no longer functionally useful to Middleville's two largest funeral directors. It is not now needed as an advertising medium nor as a maker of contacts. Now that industrial insurance has been firmly established, the ambulance, a factor in the establishing, is little more than an expense and a nuisance. Always a loss in actual operation, there would be some merit in asserting that dividends are now being paid on what was once seen as a golden opportunity, and later as a burden.

Deutscher-Wheeler continue to operate private ambulance service on the grounds that they are not firmly established and need to "keep their name before the public." It is also contended that the new Ambulance Service Company provides a poor quality of service, and that in the final analysis this is certain to reflect unfavorably on the establishments whose policies are being serviced. The writer found empirical evidence in the form of unsolicited testimony to support this contention. In spite of present indications, competent observers on the Middleville scene expect this firm to abandon ambulance service before too many years have passed. While the ambulance was useful it was welcomed as an extension of the funeral director's service to the community, and a rationale was constructed to justify its existence. No longer useful in terms of promotion and extension since state insurance laws prohibit free ambulance service clauses in industrial policies,

the ambulance has become, in the words of one of Middleville's morticians, "something that should never have been a part of the funeral home in the first place."

THE MINISTER VIS-A-VIS THE MORTICIAN

It has been said that the minister deals in crises. He is concerned with at least three crises in the life of the average person. He may very well dedicate the infant, baptize the child, marry the young adult, and conduct the service of burial when life has run its course. At the ceremony of dedication he is concerned with parents and sponsors of the child. At the time of baptism the minister deals with the individual and his relation to the church. The marriage ceremony is more complicated and involves association with forces outside the church that are for all practical purposes subservient to the religious service, at least for the time being. When death comes, however, the minister must deal with a secular element in modern society, modern funeral practice. Much has been written about this contact between the clergyman and the mortician, but all too little understanding has resulted from the controversies that have arisen out of the polemics voiced by the more liberal of the clergy and the organized resistance of the funeral business. A necessary prerequisite to the understanding of the issues involved is a reappraisal of the relationship between the minister and the mortician.

Among the relationships to be considered, the professional dimension should be examined on the basis of the classical origin of clerical professionalism and the "recent aspirant" status of the mortician. It may be opined that not all ministers deserve professional status in view of the limited education and professional training that many of them receive. On the other hand, the minister is in the classic tradition of professionalism. The mortician, for years on the periphery, has gradually achieved social recognition, and at the same time semi-professional status. Although lacking in tradition, the mortician, especially on the higher levels, assumes that the adoption of professional attitudes, the establishing of higher educational requirements for entrance into the profession, and a lofty code of ethics, will produce the desired result. The merchandising relationship, however, would seem to effectively bar any attempt at full professional status. The minister, despite efforts to the contrary on the part of the mortician, typically considers the latter a business man.

A second relationship that should be considered is concerned with the fundamental purposes represented in the relationship between the minister and the mortician. As a representative of a way of life derived from sacred sources and expedited through the instrumentality of the church, a social institution as well as a spiritual entity, the minister is pledged to attempt instrumentation of those beliefs that

constitute the fundamental doctrines of the faith. Guided by precepts that admit of compromise only at the expense of loss of influence and lessening of future effectiveness, the minister is conscience bound to attempt the application of the beliefs of the faith in all phases of the lives of his parishioners.

The mortician, on the other hand, while increasingly bound by a system of ethics based upon a felt need for the protection and preservation of the American system of private enterprise as it relates to funeral practice, remains essentially a businessman, and the profit motive is important. There is no doubt that the challenge to professionalism has made inroads into crass materialism. There is ample evidence to support the contention that, for the good of the business and the public, controls will eventually be established by the funeral directors themselves. The relationship as it presently exists in terms of the fundamental purposes represented frequently posits the doctrines of a spiritual, hence non-materialistic orientation, over against the cult of materialism that is sometimes represented in some of the aspects of modern funeral practice.

A third dimension of the mortician-minister relationship is that of person-to-person. The minister is confronted by this problem on two levels: (1) his relationship to the mortician as a citizen, and (2) his relationship to the mortician as an advisor to a third party. On the first level the problem is one of carefully measured personal feelings.

This is, of course, true of any ministerial relationship, but the mortician may be especially considered on this level. Suspected collusion with the mortician carries with it more stigma than might be true of other business relationships. The second level is based upon a triadic relationship in which minister, mortician, and client are involved. This is an especially crucial relationship since the claim to professional status by the mortician is based in part upon the assumption of counselor-advisor status, traditionally a ministerial function.

Several distinct patterns of interaction develop from the minister-mortician relationship. A distinctive pattern emerges at the point of service contact. The minister may be understandably annoyed when the mortician, as the arranger of plans, requests him to officiate at a funeral. Some concern may be evidenced because the call originated with the funeral director, and not the family of the deceased. Not being consulted concerning the arrangements for the funeral constitutes a further affront.

Other patterns of conflict have developed from the direction of the service itself. In this pattern the active-passive relationship is evident. As overall director of the ritualistic ceremony, the mortician subordinates all facets of the drama, physical factors, personnel, and the minister, to the theme of a smoothly functioning service.

A third pattern growing out of the interaction between the minister and mortician centers around the ethical propriety of many aspects of modern funeral practice. The dominant pattern at this point has been latent conflict. Undoubtedly the role that has been played by a considerable portion of the clergy has been one of quiet resentment, reluctant acceptance, or quiescent accomodation. On the other hand, the mortician has claimed a mandate from the people for the continuance of prevailing mortuary practices. The mortician has contended that, like any good businessman, he has merely met the demands of the people. Critics have been quick to assert that the mortician has played a part in the creation of a sense of need for his services on the part of the general public.

The minister-mortician relationship has been seen in the light of conflicting value orientations. The mortician has been unable to assume the character of the businessman that he is, nor the professional status to which he aspires. American concern with a materialistic culture has provided for the mortician an unqualified assist in his struggle to maintain the status quo in funeral practices.

The minister, on the other hand, is seen in a constant battle against materialism, but primarily concerned with a way of life couched in positive terms. The minister has been handicapped in the sense that the social institution through which he must work, the church, has had to operate in the same

culture that materially and ideologically has provided the basis for the mortuary system. It has been axiomatic that churches have not adhered strictly to doctrinal beliefs when faced with possible rejection on the part of the social order. Typically, the minister has reflected this attitude, one of accommodation and compromise, toward the system that produces such inconsistencies.

The relationship between the minister and the mortician approximates that which exists between the sacred and secular aspects of the culture, with significant variation on the part of individuals. Attempts on the part of ministers to alter funeral customs to more nearly conform to theologically appropriate expressions of the nature and meaning of death have been met with vigorous protests on the part of the business community,[35] and equally strong protests from the funeral director's associations.[36] A recognized entrepreneur in the business world, the mortician represents himself at times as a professional as well. The minister has the task of determining whether he is a colleague or a profit-maker, and the choice is often difficult.

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[35]Hugh S. Tigner, "A Foray into Funeral Customs," The Christian Century, LIV (October, 1937), 1263-1265. See chapter I.

[36]A. L. Kershaw, "Death, Burial and the Christian Church," The Pastor, XVIII (October, 1954), 2-4. This study by a parish social relations commission resulted in bitter attacks by funeral directors and funeral director's associations.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSIONS

The funeral business, as any other institutional development, must be seen within a frame of reference that takes cognizance not only of a multifactored analysis, but recognizes the dynamism of change as essential to an understanding of the contemporary scene. All too often this institution has been seen as a development set apart from, somewhat antagonistic to, and yet seeking a place in the mainstream of the social order. This has been the keynote of the "toleration" theme. More succinctly put, the funeral business has been seen as a necessary, albeit marginal, institution that has played a strictly functional role in the social structure.

Historically, the toleration theme has antecedents in an agrarian culture in which mutual aid was undeniably important in terms of the survival of social groups. As long as the social structure consisted of comparatively simple relationships, mutual aid in almost all phases of life was not only practical, but inherently desirable. Life's crises were met by a community response, and the need for specialists was remote. The funeral business owes its existence to a changing social order. No primarily agrarian culture could support an institution of specialists of this nature, and the culture that has made the funeral business for all practical purposes indispensable has

provided the matrix for its development.

Technological developments in general have made possible the rise of urban centers and the consequent evolution of a corps of specialists in almost every area of human endeavor. As a private enterprise type of institution emerging from such commercial interests as furniture stores and cabinet-maker's shops, the funeral business has developed in consonance with the competitive nature of the American economy. A technological development, the process of arterial embalming, has constituted the central core around which modern funeral service has been constructed. A relatively secure position in the social order has been achieved through the assumption and exercise of functions formerly accomplished by other agencies.

Through a reappraisal of the historical factors using typologically derived frames of reference, new insights into the nature of the funeral business may be obtained. In the light of a historical-traditional reappraisal the denial of full institutionalization to this corps of specialists has been predicated on the basis of conflicting culture elements, with the mortician a victim in the struggle. An important part of this denial of full institutionalization to the funeral business has been the resistance on the part of ethical and religious forces, although the secularization of the American church and consequent acceptance of many of the values of a materialist culture have tended to facilitate the acceptance of the funeral

business.

A third frame of reference tends to parallel the concepts of modern funeral practice by considering the role of the funeral director as a needed actor on the social scene. The theories of Habenstein, based upon the socio-psychological role of the funeral director in effecting status reaffirmation and grief dissolution, have not considered the role of the funeral director as an advocate of change, and, in the context of a competitive economy, the deliberate assumption of functions. In indicating the tendency for Americans to compartmentalize death and have the body removed immediately by the funeral director, the role of this individual in the implementation of those changes has been overlooked. The "education" of the public, first to embalming, and then to embalming in the funeral home, was at one time a vital task for the undertaker. The "aesthetic imperative," ascribed as a general trait in American culture, may well have received contributions <u>from</u> embalming and related arts.

The year 1929 must be considered a turning point in Middleville's mortuary history. A monopoly of long standing, complacent and extractive, was challenged in an era of economic depression by a funeral director who introduced dynamic concepts of service in contradistinction to the static conditions that accrued to a state of monopolistic control. Characterized by personal service and the application of eminently successful

business practices, the advocacy of the "revolutionizer" created a framework within which the basic structure of an institution was changed. Among the effective instruments employed in the facilitation of change, industrial insurance must be considered primordial. The personality component of the advocate, the widespread use of ambulance service, both as defensive measure against competing companies and a selling point for industrial insurance, not to mention the advertising value, must be considered. The development of a chain system of funeral homes, some thirteen in all, proved to be a liability in times of economic stress because of war.

The competitive struggle witnessed the near bankruptcy of Middleville's oldest funeral home, and the formation of three organizations from schisms in the establishment of the challenger. Both original schismatic organizations experienced difficulties of an economic nature, with the result that the first capitulated after ten years of bare existence. The death of the founder hastened the demise. Firmly established after years of struggle, a disastrous fire, and withdrawal of financial support, the funeral home established in the second schism provided the third organization its impetus when a partner withdrew to go in business for himself.

From the crucible of struggle relatively stable mortuaries have emerged, all of which are buttressed by industrial insurance.

Middleville's lower and lower middle classes constitute the bulk of a "committed" public, with upper class and professional groups remaining outside the industrial insurance category. Middleville's morticians admit that the Hagenbeck Funeral Home has remained the choice for a considerable proportion of the upper and upper middle class.

The pervasive influence of industrial insurance has made the threat of invasion by new funeral homes very unlikely. Each of Middleville's funeral homes operates within a context of an assured patronage, consequently considerable numbers of Middleville citizens have already chosen their funeral establishment with the purchase of an industrial insurance policy. Future competition, it is believed, is likely to have its locus in the area of industrial insurance, with deliberate emphasis upon the cultivation of the professional and upper middle classes. A career-type insurance agent is seen as a prerequisite to such a program, and possibly a realignment of the policy structure to adjust the level of benefits for the more privileged groups.

The emergence of reciprocal agreements between two of Middleville's funeral homes has had the effect of further stabilizing the funeral business. By mutual agreement, two of the organizations have eased policy restrictions to the point that persons holding industrial insurance policies may utilize the services of either funeral home without loss of benefits.

Several thousand Middleville citizens have committed themselves to the use of the services of a specific funeral home. This, to some degree, represents the bypassing of some of the forces that at one time were of considerable importance in the culture. The minister, for example, might have been some help in the choice of a mortician, as might family and friends. With an "advance clientele" numbering in the thousands, Middleville's funeral homes are assured of financial success and are protected against invasion from without. The present "insurance monopoly" may be viewed as a stabilizing measure, removing excessive competition and consequent insecurities that have in the past been responsible for unethical practices. Possession-control, the latent force undergirding the funeral director, remains important, if unrecognized in funeral practice.

Max Rogers, Middleville's "new professional," can be expected to continue efforts to raise the general level of the funeral business, with emphasis upon the ultimate benefits of national associations. Hagenbeck, Middleville's old line traditional funeral home, continues, almost effortlessly it seems, to dominate the field. Deutscher and Wheeler seem committed to North Middleville and an industrial clientele, with some emphasis on expansion in 1958.

This study has been conceived as the first phase of a longitudinal survey, and present plans include a re-survey of Middleville's Morticians in the future. The full effect

of Middleville's mortuary revolution can be measured only in terms of future analyses.

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APPENDIX A

TEXT OF ANNOUNCEMENT OF FORMAL OPENING,

HOLLISTER FUNERAL HOME, JUNE 5, 1931

HOLLISTER ANNOUNCES COMPLETION OF REMODELING PROGRAM

Hollister's announces the completion of their new [,] modern [,] and exceptionally equipped funeral home, and cordially invites you to their formal opening Saturday, Sunday, and Monday, June 6, 7, and 8.

Here you will find Middleville's most up-to-date funeral parlors, with every convenience. Beautiful simplicity marks the chapel; rest rooms for the family; private consultation room; in fact, the most modern arrangements and equipment of all kinds.

From the establishment of our business in 1929, Hollister Funeral Home, [we] have kept abreast of the times in supplying a superior funeral service to the people of Middleville and vicinity.

Today this establishment is one of the most modern in the state of Blank, and its facilities for service are unsurpassed anywhere.

The most advanced methods in the mortician's profession and the needs of the community alike have been studied in the development of this modern institution. The completeness and efficiency of this essential public institution makes Hollister Service, modest in cost, available to all, and the choice of a large percentage of the families of Middleville and vicinity.

OUR EQUIPMENT IS UNSURPASSED. Every part of our service has been designed in such a manner as to lend itself towards efficiency in meritable service.

Beauty and dignity marks the entire place--the reception rooms, the chapel, reposing rooms, guest rooms, consultation rooms--all have been arranged to lend itself [sic] towards privacy in keeping with the occasion for which they're to be used.

Hundred percent [sic] service is one of our prime factors that has enabled us to make the strides that we have. Someone is constantly in the main lobby office ready and willing to do your bidding.

THE CHAPEL--Our chapel has all of the dignity and beauty of a church with the privacy that appeals to sensitive, refined natures. The soft swelling tones of the pipe organ enhance the impressions of a place of worship, and make the service a beautiful tribute to the departed. The chapel comfortably seats 200 or more and a like number can be accomodated in adjoining parlors. No charge is made for the use of the chapel.

AMBULANCE SERVICE--The last word in ambulance service has been made possible through our acquisition of the most modern and up-to-date ambulance obtainable--large and roomy, comfortable and especially cushioned to eliminate all shock from jolts, this ambulance contains the last word in first aid equipment including a LUNGMOTOR which has been instrumental in saving hundreds of lives.

PERSONNEL--Included in our personnel are four licensed embalmers including Mrs. Duncan Hollister, who handles all cases pertaining to children and ladies.

THE DISPLAY ROOMS of the Hollister establishment are maintained and arranged for the convenience of the patron. Merchandise will be found to meet the tastes and requirements of every pocketbook, with the assurance that nowhere else can similar goods be bought for less money, or better goods at any price. Not only is the quality and favorable price of all Hollister merchandise guaranteed, but each article is tastefully and conveniently displayed, so that the patrons may make their selection, governed only by their desires and needs. [,] [a] And the same superior service, of course, accompanies each and every purchase.

THE PREPARATION ROOM is kept spotlessly clean. Four licensed embalmers with every modern convenience are provided to serve the public in this important department. Mrs. Hollister, a licensed embalmer, personally prepares the bodies of children and ladies.

From lobby to chapel, from service car to the latest limousine hearse, the Hollister establishment will be found one of the finest and most complete of its kind in the whole United States. It is for the use of all [of] the people, without regard to creed or financial standing, for community service at a nominal cost. Here the quality of service never varies and the use of the establishment and its many facilities is actually without any addition [al] charge. Courtesy and personal

interest in solving the problems of that trying period are likewise never a part of the bill. All [of] our merchandise is marked in plain figures for your own comparison and choice.

NEWS ITEM: OPENING OF THE

HOLLISTER FUNERAL HOME, JUNE 5, 1931

FUNERAL HOME EQUIPPED FOR FULL SERVICE

Public Invited to Formal

Opening of New Quarters

The newly remodeled establishment of the Hollister Funeral Home, Inc., at 421 Milwaukee Avenue, offers various features designed to insure the maximum of service and convenience.

The formal opening date is announced for Saturday, Sunday, and Monday, and the public is invited to visit the establishment during these three days, to be shown over the chapel, reception and guest rooms, and other departments, and see something of the modern features of the new home.

"The new home has recently been completed," states Duncan Hollister, "and we wish to acquaint the public with the complete service possible."

Mr. Hollister, a graduate of the Missouri School of Embalming, Kansas City, of the class of 1916, established his business in Middleville during February, 1929, occupying a small building on Main Street. The need for expansion becoming apparent, he moved April 1, 1930 1931 to his present quarters on Milwaukee, which have recently been remodeled. At the beginning of this year, in order to make further expansions , he incorporated his business under the name of Hollister Funeral Home, Inc.

In calling attention to the recent improvements, Mr. Hollister explains that he located in Middleville a little more than two years ago because he had been informed that Middleville was one of the most progressive cities in the [S] south.

"We were determined to give high class service," he states. "We have not catered to any particular class of trade, but have tried hard to please all whom we have been called upon to serve. As a result we have won many friends, and we can truthfully say that our service has proven satisfactory in every home to which we have been called."

"Included in the service we offer is that of a woman embalmer, who personally prepares for burial the bodies of women and children, and who thoroughly understands all [of] the duties required in rendering a high class service."

Hollister's offers ambulance service also.

"Last September we added to our equipment a new ambulance of the latest type, built especially according to our specifications." states Mr. Hollister. "It has many features to add to the comfort of the patient, such as hot and cold running water, the newest type of shock absorbers, electric fans and heaters, and a complete first aid kit. It is equipped also with a L lungmotor, a life saving device used in cases of drowning, electrical shock, strangulation, and asphyxiation. Our attendants are trained in ambulance service, and our drivers are careful at all times."

NEWS ITEM: HOLLISTER BUILDING

SERVICE THROUGH NEWS AGENCIES

FUNERAL HOME ADDS

BELMONT CASKET TO LINE

The Hollister Funeral Home at 635 Main Street announces that this firm has been appointed to represent the Belmont Casket Company of Columbus, Ohio, with their line of merchandise for Middleville and surrounding territory. "D. W. Hollister states [that] his firm feels fortunate in securing this franchise inasmuch as the Belmont people are the leading manufacturers of metal caskets in the United States." Their records indicate that many notable persons have been buried in Belmont caskets, among those former president Woodrow Wilson, Vice-President Thomas Marshall, Calvin Coolidge, Jr., Senator Bob LaFollette, Chief Justice White of the Supreme Court of the United States, Champ Clark, speaker of the House of Representatives, and many other prominent men who have passed away in the last 20 years," says Mr. Hollister.

"While it is unusual for many people to be interested in knowing the construction and details regarding the manufacture of caskets , it is beginning a new era [sic] among manufacturers to make merchandise of quality , and it is in this manner that the Belmont Company has built up [sic] such a large business on their famous line of caskets," he says. "The Belmont Company originated lead coated steel caskets and is the world's largest manufacturers [sic] in this line. It is the purpose of Belmont caskets to furnish protection after burial. They are made of 19-guage copper-bearing steel , coated on both sides with lead, tested and approved by thousands of leading funeral directors. The steel used in a Belmont has a tested tensile strength of 60,000 pounds to the square inch. Scientific demonstration proves that this casket will be intact to perform its duty as a safe burial receptacle for more than 100 years. The casket insures comfort and satisfaction to the purchaser. It has been demonstrated that a wooden burial receptacle cannot be compared to the strength and durability of a Belmont. The purchaser of a Belmont is protected by a plain enforceable guarantee that the casket will properly perform its duty. The guarantee is supported by the large resources and high prestige of the Belmont Casket Manufacturing Company. It is much consolation to the

bereaved to know that their loved ones are buried in a casket that earth cannot disturb. If ever taken up a Belmont will be [as] solid as the day it was buried. [There are] [n] No joints to soak loose in wet ground. In fact , the Belmont casket is hte [the] most indestructible casket made."

Mr. Hollister states that he carries in his display room a large assortment of Belmont caskets, [;] the prices range slightly higher than a wood casket. He says that this varied assortment of funeral goods is as complete as can be found in this section of the state.

TEXT OF ANNOUNCEMENT OF FORMAL OPENING,

HOLLISTER FUNERAL HOME, APRIL 8, 1944

OUR NEW HOME...one of the most outstanding in Blank... was designed and constructed according to requirements found in our many years of funeral experience. This new establishment represents an investment of over $50,000.00, which has incorporated in it such facilities as State Room, Spacious Chapel, Family Rooms, Ladies Lounge, Large Casket Display Room, Men's Lounge, Modern Preparation Room, and several Reposing Rooms. It is truly the outstanding establishment of its kind in the entire state of Blank. A simple desire to be of true service in every respect...nothing less can be expected by those who have come to rely on this firm in their hour of need. Feel confident that the staff of Hollister can always be sincerely and implicitly counted upon.

More than one year was spent in the study of various leading funeral homes in the United States before the plans for this building were drawn and approved. We requested of the architects that they create plans, not only for an adequate building [,] but one that would reflect a beauty, culture [,] and dignity not heretofore seen in funeral homes...we demanded, and received, a funeral home so designed and constructed as to produce the atmosphere most appreciated by families, relatives, and friends in their hour of sorrow.

Designed and built especially for this purpose, the interior of the building has been artistically and tastefully furnished to induce and promote the feeling of peace, restfulness and comfort, so desired and so seldom achieved. The Chapel, Reposing Rooms, Family Rooms and Parlors are all finished, arranged and furnished to blend into a beautiful and complete arrangement...homelike, comforting and entirely acceptable to the most exacting and fastidious personality, all arranged to remove any possible confusion.

The location of the funeral home is decidedly favorable for those friends who are forced to limit the time taken from their business or homes to attend funeral services. Most easily accessible from any residential section of the city, and centrally located, this

funeral home is far enough removed from the noise, confusion and heavy traffic of the downtown business area to be ideal, yet close enough for convenience.

In commenting on the new building, Mr. Duncan Hollister remarked: "It has been gratifying throughout the years to see that more and more families have shown a preference for our establishment. As our patronage increased, we, likewise, have increased and broadened the scope of our service. This will, of course, continue to be our policy of operation...a continuation of the fundamental principles which have endeared our firm to the hearts of the people of this community. In selecting a funeral establishment more and more families are recognizing that the place selected should be convenient, not only for the family, but also for the circle of friends. It is also recognized that the setting must be uplifting--not depressing--to everyone."

In no city or town in this great country of ours will you find a more perfect setting and a more peaceful funeral home than here at Hollister's. Undoubtedly all these reasons explain the fact that today the Hollister firm is indisputably Middleville's fastest growing funeral establishment.

In a setting of Colonial beauty and surrounded by beautiful trees through which the warm sunlight steals to fall on the walls of a funeral home containing the very latest and modern equipment there comes to the patron or the casual visitor a feeling of peace, quiet, and restfulness not experienced elsewhere.

We take pardonable pride in stating that here we have retained all the beauty and appeal of the Colonial architechture without sacrificing one single thing in comforts and modern facilities and conveniences for the benefit of the bereaved family and their circle of friends.

APPENDIX B

RULES, REGULATIONS, AND BY-LAWS

OF THE

MIDDLEVILLE INTERNMENT ASSOCIATION

Middleville, Blank

At a duly convened meeting of the Board of Directors of the Middleville Internment Association held at Middleville, Blank, on the 6th day of January, 1932, at which meeting a quorum was present, the following rules and by-laws were adopted:

1. In consideration of Two and No/100 ($2.00) Dollars initiation fee for membership, which includes the first month's dues, in the Middleville Internment Association, the said association will furnish to each member in good standing, the following benefits and priveleges:

At the time of death of the members whose name appears on the membership certificate, and surrender of same with receipt card showing that the member is justly entitled to the following benefits, the said association will furnish for such adult members, a funeral service which consists of, grey crepe casket, made of cypress, outside case, embalming, hearse service, and service which includes, making all arrangements, conducting the funeral, transferring the remains, preparation of body, obtaining of death and burial permits, use of funeral chapel, flower racks, folding chairs and other paraphernalia necessary for internment, inserting in the newspaper the death notice, and the furnishing of floral acknowledgement cards.

The following will be furnished for children: ages 10 to 20 years; casket covered in white plush, outside case, embalming and hearse service; ages 5 to 10 years, casket covered in white lambskin, outside case and f Funeral car; children from birth to 5 years; lambskin casket and funeral car.

The above service does not include cemetery charges, railroad transportation, or burial garments, and limits the service to within 65 miles of Middleville. Should death occur at a distant point outside the said limit the association will deliver the member the casket and case as designated above, and shall be relieved of further liability. The funeral service shall be furnished by the Association itself, or such party or

body corporate as it may designate, it being distinctly understood that the association will not be responsible for purchases made or services employed by the member or his family without the approval of the Association.

Ambulance service will be rendered to any member of this Association within a radius of 10 miles of Middleville, without any charge. A moderate charge will be made to members for this class of service outside of the above designated limit.

2. The first membership dues of each member is payable on or before the date which is to be set forth in each Certificate of Membership, which Certificate shall be issued to each member of the Middleville Internment Association upon his becoming a member; each is to bear a number and will also bear the name of the member, the date of the issue of the Certificate, and the amount of the monthly dues.

3. All subsequent dues of each member are payable on the first day of each month in advance; if the dues of the member be four (4) weeks in arrears, membership in the Association ceases and the Certificate issued to such members shall become void, and all dues paid shall be forfeited to the Association.

4. Membership in the Association may be revived and the Certificate be made effective, at the option of the Association upon the payment of all arrears and satisfactory evidence of the good health of the applicant and other beneficiaries at the time of the revival.

5. Should the death of the member occur while any dues are in arrears (not exceeding four weeks), the Association will nevertheless furnish the burial of the member or other beneficiaries according to the rules and by-laws.

6. All dues are payable at the office of the Association. Payments can be made on any day except Sunday or legal holidays. The collecting of dues by the Association itself is a matter of courtesy and therefore the failure of the association collector to call will not be accepted as a reason for non-payment of dues.

7. Benefits of membership in the Association attach only after a period of thirty (30) days after the date of issuance of the Membership Certificate, unless claim is made on account of accidental death or injury.

8. If the representations, warranties and agreements made in the application for membership in the Middleville Internment Association, and upon which a Membership Certificate in the Association is issued be not true, or if the conditions of the rules and by-laws be not observed in all respects, or if any erasure or alterations be made in the Membership Certificate, except by indorsement signed by the proper officers, the Certificates shall become void and membership in the Association shall cease, except that in such event the officers may if they deem proper return to such member all or a part of the dues paid by him.

9. Whenever, for any cause a member in the Association shall cease to be such all dues shall be forfeited to the Association, and the Membership Certificate shall become void, except at the discretion of the officers of the Association.

10. The acceptance of the Membership Certificate shall be taken as evidence by the Association that membership in the Middleville Internment Association has been applied for by the applicant, and that the rules and by-laws of the Association have been read by the applicant, understood and accepted by him in good faith, as to each and every clause therein contained.

11. Membership in the Association is granted in consideration of the representation, warranties and agreements, made in the application for membership in the Association, and the payment to the Association on or before the date of issuance of a Membership Certificate the dues mentioned in the Certificate, and of like monthly dues to be paid on or before the first of each month during the continuance of membership in said Middleville Internment Association.

12. Each Certificate of Membership in the Middleville Internment Association shall be signed by its President and Secretary.

13. The monthly dues of each member as hereinabove provided for is One and No/100 ($1.00) Dollars. Each certificate issued shall not only protect the members but shall also cover and protect his wife and minor children residing under the same roof and dependent upon him. However, the dependents of the members that shall be protected must be listed with their names and ages in the Certificate of Membership which is issued to the member. Also all children born to the head of the family will be added free.

14. Whenever a child of a member entitled to protection because of the family group provison marries, such child automatically loses said protection as a member of said group.

15. Upon the death of a member or any of the group included in his family and the benefits due as the result of such death have been received, membership shall ipso-facto terminate. If, however, the membership is renewed, which renewal shall be at the option of the Association, no initiation fee will be charged.

16. If a member has paid all dues and met all requirements of the Association for a period of 10 years, and decides to drop his membership from the Association, he shall receive a credit of $100.00 on his or her funeral service without the payment of further dues, which benefit shall be personal to the member alone.

We, D. W. Hollister, President of the Middleville Internment Association, and E. H. Klippstein, Secretary of the said Association, do hereby certify that the above is a correct copy of the rules and by-laws of the Middleville Internment Association which were adopted by a meeting of the Board of Directors at which a quorum was present, according to the law and the charter of the said Association.

....

President Secretary

VITA

The writer was born October 3, 1919, in Harrison, Arkansas. He received his elementary education in the public schools of Arkansas and Texas, and graduated from Harrison High School in 1937. After a year of college work as a Freshman at the University of Arkansas, he enrolled in Louisiana State University in 1940, leaving in September, 1941, for service in the Army Air Force, and returning in time to register for the Spring Semester at Louisiana State University in 1946. He received his Bachelor of Arts degree in 1948. Following his graduation he attended Yale University, where in 1951 he was awarded the Bachelor of Divinity degree.

He returned to Louisiana State University in 1953 to pursue a program of graduate study begun in 1952 at the University of Tennessee. He received his Master of Arts degree at Louisiana State University in 1955, and has been employed as Associate Professor of Sociology at Columbia College, Columbia, South Carolina since 1956. He is now a candidate for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

EXAMINATION AND THESIS REPORT

Candidate: William H. Porter, Jr.

Major Field: Sociology

Title of Thesis: MIDDLEVILLE MORTICIANS: SOME SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF CHANGE IN THE FUNERAL BUSINESS IN A SOUTHERN CITY.

Approved: O. J. Preston

Major Professor and Chairman

Richard J. Russell

Dean of the Graduate School

EXAMINING COMMITTEE:

William G. Haag

Alvin L. Bertrand

Roland J. Pellegrin

Frederick L. Bates

Clarence A. Stark

Date of Examination:

July 25, 1958